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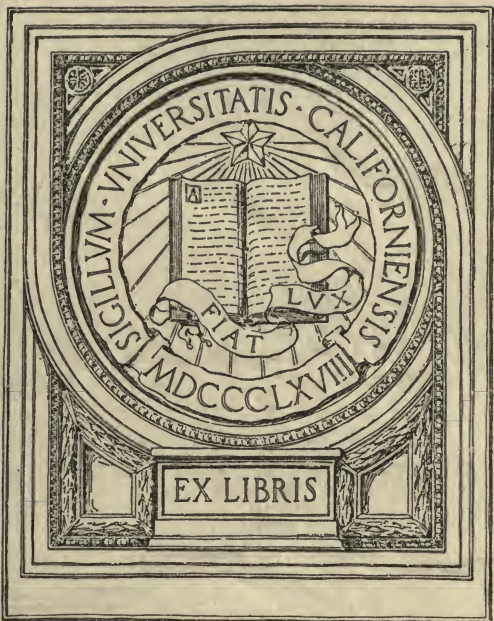


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# SPENCER'S POETRY

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# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

BY

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Christ's Hospital Horsham; Editor of "English  
Poetry for the Young" etc. etc.



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## GENERAL PREFACE

**A** GLANCE through the pages of this little book will suffice to disclose the general plan of the series of which it forms a part. Only a few words of explanation, therefore, will be necessary.

The point of departure is the undeniable fact that with the vast majority of young students of literature a living interest in the work of any poet can best be aroused, and an intelligent appreciation of it secured, when it is immediately associated with the character and career of the poet himself. The cases are indeed few and far between in which much fresh light will not be thrown upon a poem by some knowledge of the personality of the writer, while it will often be found that the most direct—perhaps even the only—way to the heart of its meaning lies through a consideration of the circumstances in which it had its birth. The purely æsthetic critic may possibly object that a poem should be regarded simply as a self-contained and detached piece of art, having no personal affiliations or bearings. Of the validity of this as an abstract principle nothing need now be said. The fact remains that, in the earlier stages of study at any rate, poetry is most valued and loved when it is made to seem most human and vital; and the human and vital interest of poetry can be most surely brought home to the reader by the biographical method of interpretation.

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This is to some extent recognised by writers of histories and text-books of literature, and by editors of selections from the works of our poets ; for place is always given by them to a certain amount of biographical material. But in the histories and text-books the biography of a given writer stands by itself, and his work has to be sought elsewhere, the student being left to make the connection for himself ; while even in our current editions of selections there is little systematic attempt to link biography, step by step, with production.

This brings us at once to the chief purpose of the present series. In this, biography and production will be considered together and in intimate association. In other words, an endeavour will be made to interest the reader in the lives and personalities of the poets dealt with, and at the same time to use biography as an introduction and key to their writings.

Each volume will therefore contain the life-story of the poet who forms its subject. In this, attention will be specially directed to his personality as it expressed itself in his poetry, and to the influences and conditions which counted most as formative factors in the growth of his genius. This biographical study will be used as a setting for a selection, as large as space will permit, of his representative poems. Such poems, where possible, will be reproduced in full, and care will be taken to bring out their connection with his character, his circumstances, and the movement of his mind. Then, in

## GENERAL PREFACE

addition, so much more general literary criticism will be incorporated as may seem to be needed to supplement the biographical material, and to exhibit both the essential qualities and the historical importance of his work.

It is believed that the plan thus pursued is substantially in the nature of a new departure, and that the volumes of this series, constituting as they will an introduction to the study of some of our greatest poets, will be found useful to teachers and students of literature, and no less to the general lover of English poetry.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON





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"Fierce war and faithful love  
And truth severe, by fairy fiction  
drest."

# SPENSER AND HIS POETRY

IT is not infrequently asserted by critics of poetry that the popularity of Spenser with the reading public of to-day is on the wane. If this be so, the fact need not be taken as detracting from the real poetical merit of his work: we have only to think of the varying fortunes of Homer, Vergil, and Milton to satisfy us on this point. Still the statement is provocative: it suggests stock-taking, and an examination of the grounds of our belief. Is it possible that the historical estimate of Spenser's work, of its merit as showing a bright light after two centuries of darkness and illuminating the vestibule of the Elizabethan epoch, has hitherto led many to overrate it? Has the deep interest which naturally belongs to the consideration of the development of our language, thought, and poetry, or the fact that Spenser's influence weighed so greatly with his poetic successors, led us to assign to the "Shepherd's Calendar" and the "Fairy Queen" an exaggerated praise? Are we inclined to be misled by the immediate and wide reputation achieved by Spenser among his contemporaries? If so, it is disconcerting to remember the now almost unread Cowley, who was buried in state by the side of Chaucer and Spenser, or Ronsard, who at his death dropped into oblivion for two

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and a half centuries. Does Spenser depend on the suffrages of the learned, who rate his work high in proportion to the trouble, chiefly linguistic, which it has cost them to get down to his gold ?

In the following pages, in which the life and poetical product of Spenser will be considered afresh, reasons will be given for entertaining no fear regarding our poet's position. A thorough knowledge of his works, which will be approached through an appreciation of his times, life, and relationships, will leave the reader reassured that Spenser's poetry has for all time an abounding measure of the really excellent, which those who care for poetry at all can clearly feel and deeply enjoy ; that his position is quite independent of the historic estimate which has made and unmade so many of the names connected with English literature ; that, judged entirely by his poetical product, he will always stand in the great company of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and Keats. As to the number of readers Spenser finds among young people under the age of sixteen, two facts are prominent. First, there is a tendency in schools to avoid the "Fairy Queen" because of the slight difficulty of the language. Too much is made of this ; but, in common with Chaucer and Burns, Spenser has this drawback. In all three cases it must be accepted and overcome : the very slight effort involved will be amply repaid. Second, many children who read Spenser at once fall under his spell and are his lovers for life. It almost

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seems that Spenser's poetry is a kind of touchstone for testing the faculty to appreciate poetry. Something of this is implied in Lamb's description of Spenser as "the poets' poet." Spenser will probably always have fewer readers than Shakespeare, and even than Milton, and it seems to be true that "he has not, like Shakespeare and Milton, been able to subjugate those who do not love poetry for its own sake." But lovers of "poetry for its own sake" are proved to be numerous if we consider one fact alone, namely, that since 1869 there have been issued no fewer than seventeen editions of the Globe edition of Spenser.

Whose is that portrait? The artist has painted a man with the high ruffle of the Elizabethan period, supported at the back with its under-propper; his beard is short and close-trimmed, his moustache slight, his lips delicately curved, his forehead high, and his eyes "deep-contemplative." Evidently he is not a man whose interests are mainly worldly. If ever character could be inferred from features, here is remarkable refinement, sensitiveness, intellectual power, and sweetness of nature. It is the portrait of Edmund Spenser, who was born in East Smithfield in 1552, in the same year as Walter Raleigh, and a year after that W. Camden who was soon to be famous as the author of "Britannia." East Smithfield was not then as we now know it, but a centre of life. Moreover, it was not separated from the country by miles of squalid suburbs; young



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Spenser stepped outside the gates into the open country; so that too much emphasis should not be laid, as is sometimes done, on Spenser's being a town-bred boy. The delights of the country were easily accessible: to the north-east there were open fields within a half-mile of East Smithfield. As with Keats, there was nothing in the birth of Spenser which would lead one to foretell his literary genius. His parents were more or less obscure people. We know that his mother's name was Elizabeth, that he had one sister, and probably one brother. His father, though well connected and related to the influential family of the Spencers of Althorpe, in Northamptonshire, was a London clothier, who practised "the art and mystery of cloth-making" in the service of one Nicholas Peele. His branch of the family was that which had settled in East Lancashire. As a poor relation young Edmund was probably taught to expect and hope much from the help of his powerful connections. Certain it is that either from affection or gratitude or from desire to advance his fortunes, or possibly from a combination of these motives, the poet dedicated several of his poems to daughters of Sir John Spencer. Thus "Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubbard's Tale," he dedicates to the fifth daughter, Lady Compton of Mountegle, having often sought opportunity "to make known to your Ladyship the humble affection and faithful duty which I have always professed, and am bound to bear to that House from whence

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ye spring." "Muipotmos, or The Fate of the Butterfly," is inscribed to the Lady Carey, "for so excellent favours as I have received at your sweet hands," and partly "for name or kindred's sake." To Lady Strange, the wife of that Lord Strange who was so generous a patron of letters, he dedicated "The Tears of the Muses," in recognition of "both your particular bounties, and also some private bands of affinity, which it hath pleased your Ladyship to acknowledge." These ladies appear in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again" under the names of Phyllis, Carillis, and Amaryllis. The poet, who from the first would seem to have been ambitious, was not without friends, nor unwilling to cultivate those who would help him to rise.

While young Edmund was making efforts to walk firmly on his feet on the nursery floor in East Smithfield, there were born in 1553 John Lyly, who was, apparently by chance, to wield so powerful an influence over the literature of his time, and Philip Sidney, the lord of Penshurst. The latter was to be brought into direct relations with Spenser, and to be largely instrumental in showing forth to the world a genius far transcending his own. When Spenser was eight years old, there died the French poet Joachim du Bellay, whose work, both directly and indirectly, was subsequently to have some share in moulding the poetical art of Spenser as a young man. About the age of twelve, Edmund Spenser was duly entered as a scholar

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of the Merchant Taylors' School, just newly founded some three years before, and under the distinguished rule of Richard Mulcaster, who was destined to survive his pupil by some twelve years. Mulcaster, during his tenure of the headmastership of this school from 1561 to 1575, impressed himself strongly on English education, and among other points insisted on his tenet that the study of English should precede both in time and in importance the study of Latin. He himself was a master of English composition, and wrote a treatise "chiefly of the right writing of the English tongue." We may be sure that his master's vigorous teaching had due weight with the boy who was later to lay such stress on the necessity of improving the vernacular. We know nothing for certain of Spenser's connection with his school except the year of his leaving it. As has been said, though London-bred, he probably had easy access to the country, and quite possibly spent what holidays were then given to schoolboys with his relations in Lancashire. Here are three stanzas from the "Shepherd's Calendar" (December) which seem to reflect the pursuits of his youth. It is true they are adapted from the French poet Marot, but he has his reason for selecting the lines, and he seems to write feelingly.

Whilome in youth, when flowrd my joyfull spring,  
Like Swallow swift I wandred here and there ;  
For heate of heedlesse lust <sup>1</sup> me so did sting,

Pleasure.



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That I of doubted daunger had no feare :

I went the wastefull woodes and forest wide,  
Withouten dreade of Wolves to bene espyed.

I wont to raunge amydde the mazie thickette,  
And gather nuttes to make me Christmas game,  
And joyed oft to chace the trembling Pricket,<sup>1</sup>  
Or hunt the hartlesse<sup>2</sup> hare til shee were tame.

What recked I of wintrye ages waste ?—

Tho<sup>3</sup> deemed I my spring would ever laste.

How often have I scaled the craggie Oke,

All to dislodge the Raven of her nest ?

How have I wearied with many a stroke

The stately Walnut-tree, the while the rest

Under the tree fell all for nuts at strife ?

For ylike to me was libertee and lyfe.

While he was still at Merchant Taylors' School, as a boy of sixteen, and very open to impressions of such troubles as were to follow this event, Mary Queen of Scots took refuge in England. The subsequent stages of her career confirmed him in his Protestant bias, and no doubt contributed something towards the feeling against Roman Catholicism which finds frequent expression in his poems.

A year later, at the age of seventeen, he went to Pembroke Hall (afterwards College) as a sizar. In this year, either while still at school or soon after going into his long residence at Cambridge, he contributed a series of sonnets to a book entitled (in short) "A Theatre of

<sup>1</sup> Buck.

<sup>2</sup> Timid.

<sup>3</sup> Then.

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Voluptuous Worldlings," devised by S. John Vander Noodt, a native of Brabant, who had taken refuge in England from the "Romish Antichrist." These are practically the same as the first six of the "Visions of Petrarch," and eleven of the "Visions of Bellay," published later as his work. The contributions were anonymous; probably Vander Noodt employed the promising young sizar (or sizar-elect) to English the sonnets, he himself not knowing English. Spenser's studies at Merchant Taylors' probably included English, Latin, Greek, and the beginnings of Italian and French. At any rate, there is definite evidence of the poet's contact with Petrarch and Joachim du Bellay, an Italian and a French poet.

Here is the first du Bellay sonnet, in which the first quatrain is a reminiscence of Vergil's "Æneid":

It was the time, when rest, soft sliding downe  
From heavens hight into mens heavy eyes,  
In the forgetfulnes of sleepe doth drowne  
The carefull thoughts of mortall miseries;  
Then did a Ghost before mine eyes appeare,  
On that great rivers banck, that runnes by Rome;  
Which, calling me by name, bad me to reare  
My lookes to heaven whence all good gifts do come,  
And crying lowd, Loe! now beholde (quoth hee)  
What under this great temple placed is:  
Lo, all is nought but flying vanitee!  
So I, that know this worlds inconstancies,  
Sith onely God surmounts all times decay,  
In God alone my confidence do stay.

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The more indirect influence which these poets exercised generally on contemporary poetry Spenser was bound to feel ; but is it fanciful to suppose that, contact once established, Petrarch and du Bellay had their share in moulding him more directly ? At any rate, it is interesting to note some points of similarity. Both Petrarch and Spenser held the doctrine that literature should teach some abstruse truth under a veil of fiction. As Petrarch worshipped and sang of his Laura, Spenser, in his " Amoretti," or sonnets, sang of Elizabeth Boyle. A desire for glory was one of the most deeply rooted passions in the nature of Petrarch, and Spenser was little less ambitious of the poet's laurels. Petrarch's appeal was not to all and sundry, but to a restricted audience which had been educated in the chivalrous love-poetry of Provence : Spenser's work was designed for the reading of the court circles. Du Bellay also, who was born in 1525, and in the year of Spenser's birth set out, in the company of Cardinal du Bellay, for Rome, where he spent five years of unwilling exile, must have made an impression on his young translator. Du Bellay had published a pamphlet (1549), " La Deffense et Illustration de la Langue Françoise," in pursuit of his cherished object of ennobling the French language. He and Ronsard recommended the exploitation of the treasures of the vernacular, " the invention of new words, provided they be moulded and fashioned after a pattern already accepted by the people . . .

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words from all the provinces of France." Montaigne also shared their idea, which had as end the erection of a dyke to protect France against the inundation of Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish. How very nearly akin to him is the Spenser who deliberately and patriotically set out to amplify the English language by drawing on ancient and rustic and many other sources! When Spenser was received as a member into Sidney's poetic coterie called "The Areopagus," he must have recalled with pride the fact that du Bellay had similarly been enrolled as one of the "Pleiad," the seven poets who had the great Ronsard at their head. If the style of the "Pleiad" poetry was fantastic and rococo, so too was Spenser's; if the "Pleiad" wrote for courtiers and great lords, so too did Spenser; if they reached out for quaint and remote learning and forged strange words for themselves, so too did Spenser. The most marked feature of the "Pleiad" singers was their insatiable craving for music: music, largely depending on ample rhyme, is *the* characteristic of Spenser. In their amorous verses they prolong the imaginative loves of the Middle Ages; they write often on the vanity of life; and in both these points Spenser is their true follower. Du Bellay writes "Regrets," a series of pathetic sonnets which come straight from the heart of the exile in Rome; Spenser writes "Complaints." Finally the nostalgia, the consuming desire for home of du Bellay in Rome, finds its counterpart in the sorrows



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of Spenser's exile in Ireland. These comparisons are not idle, because too much stress can hardly be laid on the general influence of the French poets Marot, Ronsard, and du Bellay on the English poetry of Spenser's day. The two latter had splendid reputations in their time. Ronsard lived in England for two years. In 1583 Mary Queen of Scots sent him a present of money and a vase inscribed "A Ronsard, l'Apollon de la source des Muses"; and Elizabeth, on her side, presented him with a costly diamond. Du Bellay was regarded as one of the "bright particular stars" of his age. The very forms in which these poets wrote were regarded in England as the necessary forms: they composed eclogues, elegies, sonnets, and hymns, and Spenser and his contemporaries followed suit without question. When Spenser sought to preserve the continuity and unity of the English language by his experiments in dialect and archaic words, he deserved credit at least for aiming at the patriotic ideal of the "Pleiad" poets.

That Spenser as a craftsman in diction deserves any praise is overlooked or denied by many. Professor Saintsbury, however, defends Spenser's "nearly perfect form of poetic diction. . . . It is probable that Chaucer's was, though slightly mixed, much nearer the actual language of his own time, and for that very reason it grew obsolete, and, until it was studied from the antiquarian point of view, carried the verse with it. Spenser's blend of actuality, archaism, dialect, borrowings from French and Italian,

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and the like, provided a literary medium which, though parts of it too have become antiquated, has as a whole provided patterns for all subsequent poets."

But to pick up again the thread of our story. Spenser's career at Cambridge was an exceptionally long one, comprising no less than seven years (1569-1576). Of general historical events during this period possibly the massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) in France, in which some 80,000 Protestants perished, is the one which most affected Spenser, whose Puritan tendencies, fostered by his college, were unmistakable, though, as was the case with Milton, tempered by the humanism of the scholar. He had ample time to read widely in Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, and of these Greek and Italian were probably his favourite subjects. Greek authors he probably read largely in translations mainly for their subject-matter,<sup>1</sup> but his Italian studies were directed towards the acquisition of style as well as of matter. It is known from a letter of his friend Gabriel Harvey, who was elected a Fellow of Pembroke in 1570, and was therefore his senior and Mentor, that there were misunderstandings between the undergraduates and the college authorities. "Bellum," writes Harvey in 1580, "inter capita et membra continuatum" —The struggle goes on between the heads and the limbs. It seems probable from a letter of Sidney that the universities insisted on the

<sup>1</sup> His Platonism is derived mainly from a commentary on the "Symposium" by Ficino, whom he follows in detail.

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niceties of classical style, and that Spenser's whole inclination was for wide and discursive reading. Possibly his quarrel with the authorities—if he identified himself with the undergraduates—was on this score. At any rate, he took his B.A. degree in 1573, the year in which the brilliant George Peele was elected a student of Christ Church, Oxford. The M.A. degree followed in 1576. It is obvious that he made good use of his time and was a diligent student. Herein he was encouraged both by his early training under Mulcaster and the high contemporary estimate of education, for there probably never was such a "boom" in education as in England during the latter half of the sixteenth century.

It will be well to note generally in Spenser's poetry the effect of his studies at this time, and we may consider these under the headings of ancient and contemporary literature. In Latin he was obviously well read in the whole of Vergil. In Greek he had read the poets widely, but was also a very keen student of Greek philosophy, and shows wide reading in Aristotle and Plato. Ludovic Brysket, a friend of Spenser, writes that Spenser was perfect in the Greek tongue, and "of his love and kindness encouraged me long since to follow the reading of the Greek tongue, and offered me his help to make me understand it." As the consideration of his indebtedness to Greek poetry and philosophy will take us into the heart of Spenser's poetry, it will profit us to follow the subject for a few minutes. First, as to Greek poetry.



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He translated the idyll of Moschus, "Love the Runaway." The "Fairy Queen" owes much, by way of reminiscence, to Homer—chiefly the "Odyssey"—and to Hesiod—chiefly the "Theogony." Passages are obviously imitated from Pindar, Apollonius Rhodius, and Theocritus, whose echoes are heard on all sides as we walk through the "Fairy Queen." Second, as to his direct borrowings from Greek philosophy. One of the distinctive features of the "Pleiad" poets was their exalted idea of love. Spenser, whose mind was saturated with the literature of chivalry, was in this matter a ready pupil of the "Pleiad," the more so as Plato, whom he had studied with avidity at Cambridge, provided him with a theory of Ἔρως, Love, which admirably fitted chivalric ideas. Plato has in his dialogues, the "Phædrus" and "Symposium," passages which Spenser paraphrases in the "Hymn in Honour of Love." Spenser, like Plato, represents Love as the son of Plenty and of Poverty, the plastic power which harmonises the elemental forces of matter, the influence which incites mankind to embrace the beautiful. In the following passage he is writing of mankind, and lines 3-7 contain the borrowed gold :

For, having yet in his deducted spright<sup>1</sup>  
Some sparks remaining of that heavenly fyre,  
He is enlumind with that goodly light,  
Unto like goodly semblant<sup>2</sup> to aspyre ;  
Therefore in choice of love he doth desyre

<sup>1</sup> Spirit derived from heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Likeness.

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That seemes on earth most heavenly to embrace,  
That same is Beautie, borne of heavenly race.  
For sure of all that in this mortall frame  
Contained is, nought more divine doth seeme,  
Or that resembleth more th' immortall flame  
Of heavenly light, then Beauties glorious beame.

Following the "Phædrus" and the "Symposium," the poet describes the effect of the beautiful presenting itself to the soul and the result of the passion inspired, and the distinction between the lower passion affecting the mundane nature and the higher which appeals to the soul. The substance of two chapters of the "Symposium" is contained in the following passage :

For love is Lord of truth and loialtie,  
Lifting himsele out of the lowly dust  
On golden plumes up to the purest skie,  
Above the reach of loathly sinfull lust,  
Whose base affect <sup>1</sup> through cowardly distrust  
Of his weake wings dare not to heaven fly,  
But like a moldwarpe <sup>2</sup> in the earth doth ly.

His dunghill thoughts, which do themselves enure <sup>3</sup>  
To dirtie drosse, no higher dare aspyre,  
Ne can his feeble earthly eyes endure  
The flaming light of that celestially fyre  
Which kindleth love in generous desyre,  
And makes him mount above the native might  
Of heavie earth, up to the heavens hight.

Such is the powre of that sweet passion,  
That it all sordid basenesse doth expell,  
And the refyned mynd doth newly fashion

<sup>1</sup> Affection.

<sup>2</sup> Mole.

<sup>3</sup> Accustom.

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Unto a fairer forme, which now doth dwell  
In his high thought, that would it selfe excell,  
Which he beholding still with constant sight,  
Admires the mirrour of so heavenly light.

Whose image printing in his deepest wit,  
He thereon feeds his hungrie fantasy,  
Still full, yet never satisfyde with it ;  
Like Tantale, that in store doth sterved ly,  
So doth he pine in most satiety ;  
For nought may quench his infinite desyre,  
Once kindled through that first conceived fyre.

Thereon his mynd affixed wholly is,  
Ne thinks on ought but how it to attaine ;  
His care, his joy, his hope, is all on this,  
That seemes in it all blisses to containe,  
In sight whereof all other blisse seemes vaine :  
Thrise happie man ! might he the same possesse,  
He faines <sup>1</sup> himselfe, and doth his fortune blesse.

And though he do not win his wish to end,  
Yet thus farre happie he himselfe doth weene,  
That heavens such happie grace did to him lend,  
As thing on earth so heavenly to have seene  
His harts enshrined saint, his heavens queene,  
Fairer then fairest, in his fayning eye,  
Whose sole aspect he counts felicitye.

Then forth he casts in his unquiet thought,  
What he may do, her favour to obtaine ;  
What brave exploit, what perill hardly wrought,  
What puissant conquest, what adventurous paine,  
May please her best, and grace unto him gaine ;  
He dreads no danger, nor misfortune feares,  
His faith, his fortune, in his breast he beares.

<sup>1</sup> Imagines.

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Thou <sup>1</sup> art his god, thou art his mightie guyde,  
Thou, being blind, letst him not see his feares,  
But cariest him to that which he hath eyde,  
Through seas, through flames, through thousand  
swords and speares ;

Ne ought so strong that may his force withstand,  
With which thou arimest his resistlesse hand.

Witnesse Leander in the Euxine waves,  
And stout Æneas in the Trojane fyre,  
Achilles preassing through the Phrygian glaives,<sup>2</sup>  
And Orpheus, daring to provoke the yre  
Of damned fiends, to get his love retyre ;  
For both through heaven and hell thou makest way  
To win them worship which to thee obay.

The " Hymn in Honour of Beauty " is deeply indebted to Plato, whose doctrine of " types " or perfect patterns after which the things or qualities we see on earth were originally created, is reflected in two stanzas the matter of which is taken from the " Timæus " :

What time this worlds great Workmaister did cast  
To make al things such as we now behold,  
It seemes that he before his eyes had plast  
A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould  
He fashiond them as comely as he could,  
That now so faire and seemely they appeare,  
As nought may be amended any wheare.

That wondrous Paterne, wheresoere it bee,  
Whether in earth layd up in secret store,  
Or else in heaven, . . .

. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> I.e., the God of Love.

<sup>2</sup> Swords



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Is perfect Beautie, which all men adore ;  
Whose face and feature doth so much excell  
All mortall sence, that none the same may tell.

There are many other such imitations in this poem, but we must content ourselves with one more in which men and women are warned not to confound love with its merely sensuous side.

For Love is a celestiall harmonie  
Of likely <sup>1</sup> harts composd of starres concent,  
Which joyne together in sweete sympathie,  
To worke ech others joy and true content,  
Which they have harbourd since their first descent  
Out of their heavenly bowres, where they did see  
And know ech other here belov'd to bee.

Through the "Fairy Queen," too, are scattered numerous references to Platonic sentiments. Thus Britomartis in Book III. is the incarnation of the exalted love described in the "Phædrus," and these two stanzas which we quote from Book III., Canto III., are paraphrased from the "Phædrus":

## I

Most sacred fyre, that burnest mightily  
In living brests, ykindled first above  
Emongst th' eternall spheres and lamping sky,  
And thence pourd into men, which men call Love !  
Not that same, which doth base affections move

Similar.

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In brutish mindes, and filthy lust inflame,  
But that sweete fit <sup>1</sup> that doth true beautie love,  
And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame,  
Whence spring all noble deedes and never dying  
fame :

## II

Well did Antiquity a God thee deeme,  
That over mortall mindes hast so great might,  
To order them as best to thee doth seeme,  
And all their actions to direct aright :  
The fatall purpose of divine foresight  
Thou doest effect in destined descents,  
Through deepe impression of thy secret might,  
And stirredst up th' Heroës high intents,  
Which the late world admyres for wondrous  
moniments.

But apart from the Platonic doctrine of Love the "Fairy Queen" shows many other Platonic ideas, several of which were adopted and perfected by Christianity. Such are, to quote only three, the doctrines that life is a period of probation and trial for the soul, that the bodily appetites must be subdued, and that aspiration and conduct should rest on spiritual foundations.

To turn now to Aristotle. So far as the allegory of the "Fairy Queen" is ethical, it was suggested by Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics." In Book III. Aristotle begins to deal with the several virtues, twelve of which he describes, along with their corresponding qualities on the side both of defect and excess.

<sup>1</sup> Emotion.

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Thus, the virtue is always in a middle position between two corresponding vices. Courage has for its vicious defect timidity, for its vicious excess foolhardiness ; to temperance correspond insensibility (defect) and intemperance (excess) ; liberality is in a mean between avarice and prodigality. The remaining nine virtues of the total of twelve are magnificence, magnanimity, right ambition, gentleness, sociableness, sincerity, urbanity, modesty, and indignation. Of these magnanimity or loftiness of spirit is an accompaniment and ornament of the other virtues combined. Being worthy of the highest honour, the high-minded man rates himself at his true worth, and is dignified in all his actions and movements. The "Fairy Queen" was to set forth in twelve books the "twelve moral virtues as Aristotle hath devised," King Arthur being intended to stand for the magnanimous or high-minded man. Of course the plan was not realised, and in the six extant books only three of Spenser's virtues, temperance, friendship, and justice, correspond with Aristotle's. Without giving examples, we may safely state that even minute details of the "Ethics" find their way into the "Fairy Queen."

So much for Spenser's indebtedness to the ancients. The great writers nearer his own time who influenced him are many. Chief among English writers was Chaucer, in whose works he was thoroughly steeped, and he seems to have read all the English poets of any note



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who succeeded Chaucer. French influence we have already noted under the names of Marot, Ronsard, and du Bellay. Italy contributes its quota to Spenser's product through the pastorals of Petrarch, Boccaccio, Mantuanus, and Sannazaro. Last, mention must be made of a Spanish prelate of the court of Charles V., Antonio de Guevara, the translation into English of whose two books "Marco Aurelio" (or "The Golden Book"), Englished in 1532, and "Familiar Epistles," Englished in 1575, must have produced its effect on Spenser's mind either directly or indirectly through the imitations of his coeval John Lyly, "Euphues: the Anatomy of Wit" (1579) and "Euphues and his England" (1580). Lyly was indebted to Guevara both for subjects and style. The staple of Lyly's books is love, friendship, religion, education, and the moralities generally. The aim, as Spenser avowed it was his in the "Fairy Queen," was to bring morality and truth into fashion, to bring philosophy down to "the level of every day's most quiet need." The moral elevation of Lyly is hardly less remarkable than that of Spenser. But the style it is which made Lyly, a style which, after the rapid and wonderful popularity the books gained among the courtiers, spread abroad into the daily speech of Englishmen high and low. Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare himself, at any rate in his earlier comedies, were infected with it, though Shakespeare professed to laugh at it. There was a plethora of learning at this time, and, =

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as Canon Ainger wrote, it induced "a kind of intellectual light-headedness" among men of letters. They used their learning with bravado, and affectations of style naturally resulted when they deliberately contrived that superior knowledge should show in expression. Alliteration, forced antithesis, and all kinds of pedantic skittishness were used to the limit of patience.

Such was the literary atmosphere in which Spenser grew up, and passed his university career. Two close friends he made at Cambridge, one the Gabriel Harvey mentioned above, the other Edward Kirke, who signs himself "E. K." in the introduction he wrote for the "Shepherd's Calendar." The latter matriculated as a sizar at Spenser's college in 1571, and was therefore two years the poet's junior, but he outlived him, dying in 1613. Gabriel Harvey was a man of mark, an extreme classicist who wanted to impose on English verse the metrical or quantitative system of Greek and Latin. In this respect he exercised a bad influence on Spenser, which the poet's musical ear happily enabled him soon to overcome. Though Spenser seems to have maintained agreeable relations with him, he must have been something of a trial, and he seems to have been a ruthless critic. Francis Meres, writing in 1598 in his "Palladis Tamia" ("Wit's Treasury"), says: "As Achilles tortured the dead body of Hector . . . so Gabriel Harvey hath showed the same inhumanity to Greene that lies full low in his grave."

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After leaving Cambridge at the age of twenty-four Spenser went to Lancashire, and stayed for about a year among his own folk. Possibly he was employed as a private tutor, but it is more likely that he was giving full scope to his powers and learning with a view of producing a work that would bring him honest fame. During this time he fell in love with a Rose Dyneley, whom in his verse he calls his Rosalind, and his luckless passion for whom he celebrates in the first Eclogue of the "Shepherd's Calendar."

This passion continued to be unrewarded, but was faithfully cherished for sixteen years, though another—called Menalcas in the fourth Eclogue—was the favoured lover. We hear the last of it in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again" (written in 1591 or 1592).

Ah! Shepherds, then said Colin, ye ne weet  
How great a guilt upon your heads ye draw  
To make so bold a doome,<sup>1</sup> with words unmeet,  
Of thing celestiall which ye never saw.  
For she is not like as the other crew  
Of shepherds daughters which emongst you bee,  
But of divine regard and heavenly hew,  
Excelling all that ever ye did see ;  
Not then to her that scorned thing so base,  
But to myselfe the blame that lookt so hie,  
So hie her thoughts as she herselfe have place  
And loath each lowly thing with lofty eie ;  
Yet so much grace let her vouchsafe to grant  
To simple swaine, sith her I may not love,

Judgment.

C

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Yet that I may her honour paravant <sup>1</sup>  
And praise her worth, though far my wit above.  
Such grace shall be some guerdon for the grieve  
And long affliction which I have endured ;  
Such grace sometimes shall give me some reliefe  
And ease of paine which cannot be recured.  
And ye my fellow shepherds, which do see  
And heare the languors of my too long dying,  
Unto the world for ever wittenesse bee  
That hers I die, nought to the world denying  
This simple trophe of her great conquest.

### II

**W**E have now reached the year 1577, the twenty-fifth of Spenser's age. His period of obscurity and study for study's sake is now ended : with a mind exceptionally well stored with learning and lofty ideals, he was burning to make his mark on the world of letters. Harvey, who knew his powers, advised him to leave the North and go to London to seek preferment, and probably with some manuscript work in hand he arrived in the metropolis, and was introduced—was it by Harvey or some of the Althorpe Spencers?—to Sir Philip Sidney, who was already a recognised patron of learning and himself eager to win the laurels of authorship. At any rate, this year finds him living in Sidney's house at Penshurst, in Kent, in what capacity is not known, whether simply as friend or in some tutorial or secretarial capacity. Sidney introduced him to his father and

<sup>1</sup> Above others.



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to his uncle, Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who in turn brought him to the notice of Queen Elizabeth. This, for the clothier's son, was a rapid climb up the ladder of patronage, if not of preferment. It seems probable that this year he went to Ireland with Philip Sidney's father, who was appointed Lord Deputy ; this may be inferred from a passage in " The Present State of Ireland " (probably circulated in MS. in 1596, though not published till some time after Spenser's death in 1633).

We must here glance at the career of Sir Philip Sidney, for apart from it that of Spenser would be unintelligible. So long as both lived, their stars were in close conjunction. Sidney was educated at Shrewsbury School between the ages of ten and fourteen, when he went to Christ Church, Oxford, staying at the university till he was seventeen. On this structure was placed that coping-stone of early education, a period (three years) of foreign travel. He was now in the graces of mind and person the potential courtier, and at court Queen Elizabeth delighted to keep him, despite the fact that such forced inactivity was very irksome. It was not only because the sentiment was a commonplace of the school of poetry he affected, but also because he felt it keenly in his experience, that Sidney penned the following lines in " Dispraise of a Courtly Life " :

In this wood a man I met  
On lamenting wholly set :



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Ruing change of wonted state,  
Whence he was transformèd late,  
Once to shepherds' God retaining,  
Now in servile court remaining.

One compensation in court life he found in the company of poets, such as Fulke Greville, his school and college friend and a man of exceptional intellect and uprightness of character, Edward Dyer, famous as the author of the poem "My mind to me a kingdom is," and later Spenser. Sidney too made an effort to fall in with the learned Harvey's plans for abolishing rhyme and imposing Latin metres on English poetry, but soon gave up so impossible a design. A brief quotation of four lines from one of his experiments is enough to show how complete was the failure. They are intended as an imitation of Latin elegiac metre.

Fortune, nature, love, long have contended about me,  
Which should most miseries cast on a worm that  
I am :

Fortune thus gan say, "Misery and misfortune is  
all one,"

And of misfortune fortune hath only the gift, &c.

The wings of genius were not likely long to suffer the confinement of such pedantry. It was in 1581, some two years after the publication of Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," during an enforced absence from the court, that Sidney wrote his prose romance, "Arcadia," in the style of Lyly's "Euphues." His series of love sonnets, "Astrophel and Stella," for all

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their imitations and adaptations of words and phrases, is sincere work : they are songs which are sung from and will reach the heart. Stella was Penelope Devereux, daughter of the Earl of Essex, whom it had practically been arranged by the two families Sidney was to marry. The project, however, fell through, and the lady married Lord Rich. The sonnets are written, after the manner of the "Pleiad" school, to a lofty and partly conventional ideal, the framework of which was Penelope Rich. They were in private circulation, as the custom was, for some time before they were published in 1591, some five years after the poet's death. It is not only for his patronage of poets that Sidney is memorable, but also for his own poetic achievement. A critic writes : " As a pioneer Sidney makes an unanswerable claim to praise. He stands shoulder to shoulder with Spenser in the great movement of English verse." In his "Apologie for Poetrie" he professes to reprobate an artificial style in poetry, and when he was in this mood much that Spenser wrote must have been displeasing to him. But his own practice in his sonnets does not tally with his theory. He was at one with the theories of the "Pleiad" and with the efforts of his friend Spenser in his high estimate of the capacity of the English language of his time, which was "capable of any excellent exercising of it." It has both sweetness and majesty in verse : "The English, before any other vulgar language that I know, is fit for both sorts."

Sidney

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Spenser's moral aim in poetry—whether the aim as well as the total effect of poetry should be moral is too thorny a subject here to handle—is obviously shared by his friend, who finds poesie “full of virtue-breeding delightfulness.” “No philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Vergil.”

In 1579 Spenser was living at the house of Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, in the Strand, which stood where now is Essex Street, and mixing in the best intellectual society of the time. The “Areopagus” was a literary society on the model of the “Pleiad” of Ronsard and du Bellay, and Sidney would seem to have been its president. He certainly was Spenser's chief encourager: “who my Muse did lift.” In such a society Spenser, in spite of his modesty, could hardly fail to be ambitious, and self-conscious as well to an extent to which Shakespeare never was.

At the end of 1579, or the beginning of 1580, was published anonymously “The Shepherd's Calendar,” but with no real wish to conceal the identity of the “Immerito” who signs the Proem or Introduction. Spenser thus gloriously opened the glorious Elizabethan era. He was immediately acclaimed as the “new poet,” and in his “Apologie for Poetrie” Sidney singles out the “Calendar” for praise, though he disapproves of the old rustic language employed. It was to Sidney, naturally, that the author dedicated this poem, the first fruits of his genius, and the first sustained work that

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had been produced for two centuries since Chaucer. Spenser bridged the interval, for his work shows deep study of the "father of English poetry." The book was introduced by his friend "E. K." in a formal letter to Gabriel Harvey. It is obvious that "E. K." had fears for the reception of the poem because of its deliberately archaic language, and he set himself to protest its excellence; and in his anxiety he protested too much. Of the words he writes: "I grant they be something hard, and of most men unused, yet both English, and also used of most excellent authors, and most famous poets." He is of opinion "that they bring great grace, and, as one would say, authority to the verse. . . . He hath laboured to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use, and almost clean disinherited." The sentiment is clearly drawn from Horace's "Epistles" (Book II., Ep. 2), a passage which I will give in translation: "For the benefit of his public he [the poet] will unearth and bring to the light of day beautiful phrases that have long lain hidden, phrases which were on the lips of old worthies like Cato and Cethegus, but are now buried in unseemly mildew and neglected age. New words he will adopt, provided usage fathers them." But enough has already been said on this subject. The poet writes under the lowly name of Colin and in the unambitious form of Eclogues, because "he chose rather to unfold great matter of argument



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covertly than, professing it, not suffice thereto accordingly." This again is taken from the "Ars Poetica" of Horace, who commends the poet whose "plan is to bring, not smoke out of the flash, but from the smoke light, so that he may later reveal his striking marvels."

✓ The twelve Eclogues (so called after Vergil's pastorals) "for that they be proportioned to the state of the twelve months, he termeth the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' applying an old name to a new work." Besides writing an introduction, "E. K." contributes a glossary or commentary, which is useful, but not always correct as to the meanings of words.

✓ Spenser quite naturally adopted the Pastoral form, which was an admitted convention of the time. Originating, of course, in a description of homely shepherd life, pastoral poetry had come to be regarded as the vehicle of very multifarious matter. Even in its beginnings the form was essentially in some degree artificial. Do there anywhere exist pastoral poems made by peasants for peasants on the life of peasants? <sup>1</sup> It is no wonder that artificiality grew upon such a stock, and that the sixteenth-century poets put into their pastorals more of art than of nature, and possibly more of artifice than of art. There is not much pretence of reality in the "Shepherd's Calendar." To quote Professor T. G. Tucker: "The notion of the smock-frocked rustic of rainy Britain vying

William Barnes, the Dorset poet, satisfies the two latter conditions, though not the first.



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in song with another smock-frocked rustic concerning his Amaryllis or his Chloe is not a little ludicrous. Especially is this so when we know that Colin Clout, Cuddie, Hobbino!, and the other swains are talking moral wisdom." As Dr. C. H. Herford points out, three schools of pastoral poetry had a vogue in Spenser's day : that of the Greek poet Theocritus (about 280 B.C.), and Bion, and their Latin imitator Vergil; that of the Latin humanists, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Mantuanus; and that of the French humanist, Clement Marot. Spenser is indebted to all three. In Theocritus, apart from the descriptions of Sicilian landscape, the poetry of the shepherds takes three forms : the singing-match between two shepherds singing alternately, the dirge for a dead shepherd, and the love-lay. To these, which became fixed forms, Vergil added the panegyric, or poem in praise of an individual, and the allegorical pastoral, which veils allusions to important persons or matters of state. He also invented the name Eclogue (i.e., selection), which has since clung to pastoral poems. Petrarch first used the pastoral for the purposes of hidden satire, Boccaccio made it a vehicle for romance; Mantuanus added to satire thoroughgoing realism, while his contemporary Sannazaro in his "Arcadia" (1490-1495), a prose work studded with lyrics, withdraws the pastoral again from the everyday world and invents a purely ideal Arcadia of woods and birds and fountains which became stereotyped. Into this was, later, infused the spirit

influence  
of theoc.

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of chivalry, as we see it in Sidney's "Arcadia." But Spenser drew most from Marot, who retains more of the simplicity and freshness of Theocritus. We have already quoted some stanzas of Marot on a boy's country pursuits, imitated by Spenser, the first Englishman to make a noteworthy contribution to this form of literature. But though this is so, Chaucer supplied several of the ingredients of the Spenserian Eclogue: the story told in verse, the fable and the allegory, and "ancient and solemn words." This indebtedness to Chaucer (whom he calls Tityrus) Spenser himself proclaims with no uncertain voice. In brief, the twelve Eclogues of the "Shepherd's Calendar" are, as Dr. Herford says, "a sort of summary of the whole past history of pastoralism." In one the naturalism of Theocritus is more prominent, in another the conventions of Vergil, in another the political diatribes of Mantuan, in another the gracious pathos of Marot." Spenser is original in the idea of a sequence of Eclogues corresponding to the month, although several of the poems have only a slight connection with the month they represent. As to the structure, it varies between monologue, duologue, and a conversation of three. I shall make bold to follow Dr. Herford in his happy treatment of the subject-matter of the Eclogues, and consider the shepherd as moralist, as lover, as poet, and as rustic. The satirical Eclogues (2, 5, 7, 9) are distinguished by their vernacular metre, pronounced archaism, and

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provincialism of speech, and by the fact that "Colin" (that is, Spenser himself) is not mentioned in them. Happily Spenser knew how to temper his satire with sobriety and restraint. Colin, the lover, the luckless wooer of Rosalind, is "the least indistinct figure in the poem." As poet, Spenser's shepherd gives us a singing-match (8), a dirge (11), and a love-lay (12). He also tells us tales in the form of a fable (one of which will be quoted presently), so marking Spenser's discipleship to Chaucer. As rustic, the shepherd does his best to impart something of a national air to the poem by painting English climate and scenery and adopting English names.

Last, as to the language of these poems. It has been shown that Spenser (like Vergil) was a deliberate innovator in speech. The "Calendar" is "a more pronounced departure from current poetic speech than any other work of Spenser's." There is a great mixture of archaic words, provincialisms, Spenserian inventions, and modern words. Forms belonging to different dialects occur almost side by side; thus, "couth" and "could," "war" and "worse," "runne" and "renne," "mote" (= must) and "mought," "sith" and "since," "youngh" and "youth." It is true that some of these were familiar variants in the colloquial speech of the day, but this fact does not account for so many of the variants as the poet's haphazard mixture of forms derived from Middle English literature, dialect, colloquialisms, and

*Spencer  
contrib*

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*style*  
learned words. As compared with the vocabulary, the syntax of the "Shepherd's Calendar" is "but slightly removed from that of contemporary verse." In style the Eclogues are full of "beautiful redundancies." Alliteration, recognised in Spenser's day as a refinement, is used to excess; so also is the Euphuistic device of play on words, as in such lines as "How dolefully his doole [sorrow] thou dost rehearse," "We deeme of Death as doome [judgment] of ill desert"; and pathetic repetition, of which an example has already been given, is frequent, but effective; e.g.:

Dido, my deare, alas is dead :  
Dead, and lyeth wrapt in lead.

Spenser had probably noted the pathetic effect of the few such repetitions employed by Vergil, and he turned his observation to good account. On the whole, there are three marked characteristics of the Eclogues: melodiousness of versification, gracefulness of style, but perilous fluency of language.

The following passages are quoted to illustrate the shepherd as moralist, as poet, and as lover. The first is from "February," which is mainly a discourse on old age, "in the person of Thenot, an old shepherd, who for his crookedness and unlustiness is scorned of Cuddie, an unhappy herdsman's boy." The subject is well adapted to the month of the year, in which decay seems most pronounced. The old man tells a lively tale of the Oak and Briar. After ninety-



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seven lines Thenot (a name borrowed from Marot) begins :

There grewe an aged Tree on the greene,  
A goodly Oake sometime had it bene,  
With armes full strong and largely displayd,  
But of their leaves they were disarayde :  
The bodie bigge, and mightely pight,  
Thoroughly rooted, and of wonderous hight ;  
Whilome had bene the King of the field,  
And mochell mast to the husband did yelde,  
And with his nuts larded <sup>1</sup> many swine :  
But now the gray mosse marred his rine ;  
His bared boughes were beaten with stormes,  
His toppe was bald, and wasted with wormes,  
His honor decayed, his braunches sere.

Hard by his side grewe a bragging Brere,  
Which proudly thrust into Thelement,  
And seemed to threat the Firmament :  
It was embellisht with blossomes fayre,  
And thereto aye wonned <sup>2</sup> to repayre  
The shepheards daughters to gather flowres,  
To peinct their girlonds with his colowres ;  
And in his small bushes used to shrowde  
The sweete Nightingale singing so lowde ;  
Which made this foolish Brere wexe so bold,  
That on a time he cast him to scold  
And snebbe <sup>3</sup> the good Oake, for he was old.

“ Why standst there (quoth he) thou brutish  
blocke ?

Nor for fruit nor for shadowe serves thy stocke ;  
Seest how fresh my flowers bene spredde,  
Dyed in Lilly white and Cremsin redde,  
With Leaves engrained in lusty greene ;  
Colours meete to clothe a mayden Queene ?

Made fat.

Used.

<sup>3</sup> Snub.



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Thy wast<sup>1</sup> bignes but combers the grownd,  
 And dirks<sup>2</sup> the beauty of my blossomes rownd :  
 The mouldie mosse, which thee accloieth,  
 My Sinamon smell too much annoieth :  
 Wherefore soone I rede thee hence remove,  
 Least thou the price of my displeasure prove."  
 So spake this bold brere with great disdaine :  
 Little him aunswered the Oake againe,  
 But yeelded, with shame and greefe adawed,<sup>3</sup>  
 That of a weede he was overcrawed.

Yt chaunced after upon a day,  
 The Hus-bandman selfe to come that way,  
 Of custome for to survewe his grownd,  
 And his trees of state in compasse rownd :  
 Him when the spitefull brere had espyed,  
 Causelesse complained, and lowdly cryed  
 Unto his lord, stirring up sterne strife.

" O, my liege Lord ! the God of my life !  
 Pleaseth you ponder your Suppliants plaint,  
 Caused of wrong and cruell constraint,  
 Which I your poore Vassall dayly endure ;  
 And, but your goodnes the same recure,  
 Am like for desperate doole to dye,  
 Through felonous force of mine enemye."  
 Greatly aghast with this piteous plea,  
 Him rested the goodman on the lea,  
 And badde the Brere in his plaint proceede.  
 With painted words tho gan this proude weede  
 (As most usen Ambitious folke :)  
 His colowred crime with craft to cloke.

" Ah, my soveraigne ! Lord of creatures all,  
 Thou placer of plants both humble and tall,  
 Was not I planted of thine owne hand,  
 To be the primrose of all thy land ;

Waste.

Darkens.

Daunted.

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With flowring blossomes to furnish the prime,  
 And scarlot berries in Sommer time ?  
 How falls it then that this faded Oake,  
 Whose bodie is sere, whose braunches broke,  
 Whose naked Armes stretch unto the fyre,  
 Unto such tyrannie doth aspire ;  
 Hindering with his shade my lovely light,  
 And robbing me of the swete sonnes sight ?  
 So beate his old boughes my tender side,  
 That oft the bloud springeth from woundes wyde ;  
 Untimely my flowres forced to fall,  
 That bene the honor of your Coronall :  
 And oft he lets his cancker-wormes light  
 Upon my braunches, to worke me more spight ;  
 And oft his hoarie locks downe doth cast,  
 Where-with my fresh flowretts bene defast :  
 For this, and many more such outrage,  
 Craving your goodlihead to aswage  
 The ranckorous rigour of his might,  
 Nought aske I, but onely to hold my right  
 Submitting me to your good sufferance,  
 And praying to be garded from greivance."

To this the Oake cast him to replie  
 Well as he couth ; but his enemie  
 Had kindled such coles of displeasure,  
 That the good man noulde stay his leasure,  
 But home him hasted with furious heate,  
 Encreasing his wrath with many a threate :  
 His harmefull Hatchet he hent in hand,  
 (Alas ! that it so ready should stand !)  
 And to the field alone he speedeth,  
 (Ay little helpe to harme there needeth !)  
 Anger nould let him speake to the tree,  
 Enaunter <sup>1</sup> his rage mought cooled bee ;

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But to the roote bent his sturdy stroake,  
 And made many wounds in the wast Oake.  
 The Axes edge did oft turne againe,  
 As halfe unwilling to cutte the graine ;  
 Semed, the sencelesse yron dyd feare,  
 Or to wrong holy eld did forbear ;  
 For it had bene an auncient tree,  
 Sacred with many a mysteree,  
 And often crost with the priestes crewe,<sup>1</sup>  
 And often halowed with holy-water dew :  
 But sike fancies weren foolerie,  
 And broughten this Oake to this miserye ;  
 For nought mought they quitten him from decay,  
 For fiercely the good man at him did laye.  
 The blocke oft groned under the blow,  
 And sighed to see his neare overthrow.  
 In fine, the steele had pierced his pitth,  
 Tho downe to the earth he fell forthwith.  
 His wonderous weight made the ground to quake,  
 Thearth shronke under him, and seemed to shake :—  
 There lyeth the Oake, pitied of none !

Now stands the Brere like a lord alone,  
 Puffed up with pryde and vaine pleasaunce ;  
 But all this glee had no continuaunce :  
 For eftsones Winter gan to approche ;  
 The blustering Boreas did encroche,  
 And beate upon the solitarie Brere ;  
 For nowe no succoure was seene him nere.  
 Now gan he repent his pryde to late ;  
 For, naked left and disconsolate,  
 The byting frost nipt his stalke dead,  
 The watrie wette weighed downe his head,  
 And heaped snowe burdned him so sore,  
 That nowe upright he can stand no more ;

<sup>1</sup> Cruse, holy vessel.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

And, being downe, is trodde in the durt  
Of cattell, and brouzed, and sorely hurt.  
Such was thend of this Ambitious brere,  
For scorning Eld—

### *Cuddie*

Now I pray thee, shepheard, tel it not forth :  
Here is a long tale, and little worth.  
So longe have I listened to thy speche,  
That graffed <sup>1</sup> to the ground is my breche :  
My hart-blood is wel nigh forne, I feele,  
And my galage <sup>2</sup> growne fast to my heele :  
But little ease of thy lewd <sup>3</sup> tale I tasted :  
Hye thee home, shepheard, the day is nigh wasted.

The shepherd-poet's powers are next illustrated in the dirge in "November," which marked the highest reach of English lyric up to that time.

In this xi. Æglogue hee bewayleth the death of some mayden of greate bloud, whom he calleth Dido. The personage is secrete, and to me altogether unknowne, albe of him selfe I often required the same. This Æglogue is made in imitation of Marot his song, which he made upon the death of Loys the Frenche Queene ; but farre passing his reache, and in myne opinion all other the Æglogues of this booke.

The extract begins at line 49.

### *Colin*

Thenot, to that I choose thou doest me tempt ;  
But ah ! to well I wote my humble vaine,  
And howe my rimes bene rugged and unkempt ;  
Yet, as I conne, my conning I will strayne.

<sup>1</sup> Grafted, stuck.

<sup>2</sup> Wooden shoe.

<sup>3</sup> Foolish.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“Up, then, Melpomene ! the mournefulst Muse of  
nyne,

Such cause of mourning never hadst afore ;

Up, grieslie ghostes ! and up my rufull ryme !

Matter of myrth now shalt thou have no more ;

For dead shee is, that myrth thee made of yore.

Dido, my deare, alas ! is dead,

Dead, and lyeth wrapt in lead.

O heavie herse !<sup>1</sup>

Let streaming teares be poured out in store ;

O carefull verse !

“Shepheards, that by your flocks on Kentish downes  
abyde,

Waile ye this wofull waste of Natures warke ;

Waile we the wight whose presence was our pryde ;

Waile we the wight whose absence is our carke ;<sup>2</sup>

The sonne of all the world is dimme and darke :

The earth now lacks her wonted light,

And all we dwell in deadly night.

O heavie herse !

Breake we our pypes, that shrild as lowde as Larke ;

O carefull verse !

“Why doe we longer live, (ah ! why live we so  
long ?)

Whose better dayes death hath shut up in woe ?

The fayrest floure our gyrlond all emong

Is faded quite, and into dust ygoe.

Sing now, ye shepheards daughters, sing no moe

The songs that Colin made you in her praise,

But into weeping turne your wanton layes.

O heavie herse !

Nowe is time to dye : Nay, time was long ygoe :

O carefull verse !

Ceremonial.

<sup>2</sup> Grief.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“ Whence is it, that the flouret of the field doth fade,  
And lyeth buried long in Winters bale ;  
Yet, soone as spring his mantle hath displayde,  
It floureth fresh, as it should never fayle ?

But thing on earth that is of most availle,  
As vertues braunch and beauties budde,  
Reliven not for any good.

O heavie herse !

The braunch once dead, the budde eke needes must  
quaile ;

O carefull verse !

“ She, while she was, (that was, a woful word to sayne !)  
For beauties prayse and plesaunce had no peere ;  
So well she couth the shepheards entertayne  
With cakes and cracknells, and such country chere :  
Ne would she scorne the simple shepheards swaine ;

For she would cal him often heame,  
And give him curds and clouted Creame.

O heavie herse !

Als<sup>1</sup> Colin Cloute she would not once disdayne ;

O carefull verse !

“ But nowe sike happy cheere is turnd to heavie  
chaunce,

Such plesaunce now displast by dolors dint :<sup>2</sup>

All musick sleepes, where death doth leade the  
daunce,

And shepheards wonted solace is extinct.

The blew in black, the greene in gray is tinct ;

The gaudie girlonds deck her grave,

The faded flowres her corse embrave.

O heavie herse !

Morne nowe, my Muse, now morne with teares besprint ;

O carefull verse !

Also.

Pang of grief.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“ O thou greate shepheard, Lobbin, how great is thy  
griefe !

Where bene the nosegayes that she dight for thee ?

The coloured chaplets wrought with a chiefe,<sup>1</sup>

The knotted rush-ringes, and gilte Rosemaree ?

For shee deemed nothing too deere for thee.

Ah ! they bene all yclad in clay ;

One bitter blast blewe all away.

O heavie herse !

Thereof nought remaynes but the memoree ;

O carefull verse !

“ Ay me ! that dreerie Death should strike so  
mortall stroke,

That can undoe Dame Natures kindly course ;

The faded lockes fall from the loftie oke,

The flouds do gaspe, for dried is theyr sourse,

And flouds of teares flowe in theyr stead perforce :

The mantled medowes mourne,

Theyr sondry colours tourne.

O heavie herse !

The heavens doe melt in teares without remorse ;

O carefull verse !

“ The feeble flocks in field refuse their former foode,  
And hang theyr heads as they would learne to weepe ;

The beastes in forest wayle as they were woode,

Except the Wolves, that chase the wandring sheepe,

Now she is gone that safely did hem keepe :

The Turtle on the bared braunch

Laments the wound that death did launch.

O heavie herse !

And Philomele her song with teares doth steepe ;

O carefull verse !

<sup>1</sup> Worked with a head, shaped into a nosegay.

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“ The water Nymphs, that wont with her to sing and  
daunce,

And for her girlond Olive braunches beare,  
Nowe balefull boughes of Cypres doen advaunce ;  
The Muses, that were wont greene bayes to weare,  
Now bringen bitter Eldre braunches seare ;

The fatall sisters eke repent

Her vitall threde so soone was spent.

O heavie herse !

Morne now, my Muse, now morne with heavy cheare,  
O carefull verse !

“ O ! trustless state of earthly things, and slipper<sup>1</sup>  
hope

Of mortal men, that swincke and sweate for nought,  
And, shooting wide, doe misse the marked scope ;  
Now have I learnd (a lesson derely bought)

That nys<sup>2</sup> on earth assuraunce to be sought ;

For what might be in earthlie mould,

That did her buried body hould.

O heavie herse !

Yet saw I on the beare when it was brought ;

O carefull verse !

“ But maugre<sup>3</sup> death, and dreaded sisters deadly  
spight,

And gates of hel, and fyrie furies forse,  
She hath the bonds broke of eternall night,  
Her soule unbodied of the burdenous corpse.

Why then weepes Lobbin so without remorse ?

O Lobb ! thy losse no longer lament ;

Dido nis dead, but into heaven hent.<sup>4</sup>

O happye herse !

Cease now, my Muse, now cease thy sorrowes sourse ;

O joyfull verse !

<sup>1</sup> Slippery, elusive.    <sup>2</sup> There is not.    <sup>3</sup> In spite of.    <sup>4</sup> Taken.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“Why wayle we then? why weary we the Gods  
with playnts,

As if some evill were to her betight?

She raignes a goddesse now among the saintes,  
That whilome was the saynt of shepheards light,  
And is enstalled nowe in heavens hight.

I see thee, blessed soule, I see

Walke in Elisian fieldes so free.

O happy herse!

Might I once come to thee, (O that I might!)

O joyfull verse!

“Unwise and wretched men, to weete whats good or  
ill,

We deeme of Death as doome of ill desert;

But knewe we, fooles, what it us bringes until,

Dye would we dayly, once it to expert!

No daunger there the shepheard can astert;<sup>1</sup>

Fayre fieldes and pleasaunt layes there bene;

The fieldes ay fresh, the grasse ay greene.

O happy herse!

Make haste, ye shepheards, thether to revert:

O joyfull verse!

“Dido is gone afore; (whose turne shall be the  
next?)

There lives shee with the blessed Gods in blisse,

There drincks she Nectar with Ambrosia mixt,

And joyes enjoys that mortall men doe misse.

The honor now of highest gods she is,

That whilome was poore shepheards pryde,

While here on earth she did abyde.

O happy herse!

Ceasse now, my song, my woe now wasted is

O joyfull verse!”

<sup>1</sup> Surprise.



# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

## *Thenot*

Ay, francke shepheard, how bene thy verses meint <sup>1</sup>  
With doleful pleasaunce, so as I ne wotte  
Whether rejoyce or weepe for great constrainte.  
Thyne be the cossette,<sup>2</sup> well hast thou it gotte.  
Up, Colin up ! ynough thou morned hast ;  
Now gynnes to mizzle, hye we homeward fast.

In "December" we have the shepherd-poet as lover, improving on his model Marot by his noble seriousness. Colin complains to the God Pan, and compares the periods of his life to the four seasons of the year. His youth was the spring-time, when he was fresh and free from love. We pick up the poem at line 55 :

" Tho gan my lovely Spring bid me farewel,  
And Sommer season sped him to display  
(For love then in the Lyons house did dwell)  
The raging fyre that kindled at his ray.

A comett stird up that unkindly heate,  
That reigned (as men sayd) in Venus seate.

" Forth was I ledde, not as I wont afore,  
When choise I had to choose my wandring waye,  
But whether luck and loves unbridled lore  
Woulde leade me forth on Fancies bitte to playe :

~~The bush my bedde, the bramble was my bowre,~~  
The Woodes can witnesse many a wofull stowre.

" Where I was wont to seeke the honey Bee,  
Working her formall rowmes in wexen frame,

<sup>1</sup> Mingled.

<sup>2</sup> Hand-reared lamb.

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

The grieslie Tode-stoole growne there mought I se,  
And loathed Paddocks <sup>1</sup> lording on the same :

And where the chaunting birds luld me asleepe,  
The ghastlie Owle her grievous ynne doth keepe.

“ Then as the springe gives place to elder time,  
And bringeth forth the fruite of sommers pryde ;  
Also my age, now passed youngthly pryme,  
To thinges of ryper season selfe applyed,  
And learnd of lighter timber cotes to frame,  
Such as might save my sheepe and me fro shame.

“ To make fine cages for the Nightingale,  
And Baskets of bulrushes, was my wont :  
Who to entrappe the fish in winding sale <sup>2</sup>  
Was better seene, or hurtful beastes to hont ?  
I learned als the signes of heaven to ken,  
How Phœbe fayles, where Venus sittes, and when.

“ And tryed time yet taught me greater thinges ;  
The sodain rysing of the raging seas,  
The soothe of byrdes by beating of their winges,  
The power of herbs, both which can hurt and ease,  
( And which be wont t' enrage the restlesse sheepe,  
And which be wont to worke eternall sleepe.

“ But, ah ! unwise and witlesse Colin Cloute,  
That kydst the hidden kinds of many a wede,  
Yet kydst not ene to cure thy sore hart-roote,  
Whose ranckling wound as yet does rifelye bleede.  
Why livest thou stil, and yet hast thy deathes  
wound ?

Why dyest thou stil, and yet alive art founde ?

“ Thus is my sommer worne away and wasted,  
Thus is my harvest hastened all to rathe ;

<sup>1</sup> Toads.

<sup>2</sup> Wicker net.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

The eare that budded faire is burnt and blasted,  
And all my hoped gaine is turnd to scathe :  
Of all the seede that in my youth was sowne  
Was nought but brakes and brambles to be mowne.

“ My boughes with bloosmes that crowned were at firste,  
And promised of timely fruite such store,  
Are left both bare and barrein now at erst ;  
The flattring fruite is fallen to grownd before.  
And rotted ere they were halfe mellow ripe ;  
My harvest, wast, my hope away dyd wipe.

“ The fragrant flowres, that in my garden grewe,  
Bene withered, as they had bene gathered long ;  
Theyr rootes bene dried up for lacke of dewe,  
Yet dewed with teares they han be ever among.  
Ah ! who has wrought my Rosalind this spight,  
To spil the flowres that should her girlond dight ?

“ And I, that whilome wont to frame my pype  
Unto the shifting of the shepheards foote,  
Sike follies nowe hath gathered as too ripe,  
And cast hem out as rotten and unsoote.<sup>1</sup>  
The loser Lasse I cast to please no more ;  
One if I please, enough is me therefore.

“ And thus of all my harvest-hope I have  
Nought reaped but a weedye crop of care ;  
Which, when I thought have thresht in swelling sheave,  
Cockel for corne, and chaffe for barley, bare :  
Soone as the chaffe should in the fan be fynd,  
All was blowne away of the wavering wynd.

“ So now my yeare drawes to his latter terme,  
My spring is spent, my sommer burnt up quite ;

<sup>1</sup> Unsweet.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

My harveste hasts to stirre up Winter sterne,  
And bids him clayme with rigorous rage hys right :  
So nowe he stormes with many a sturdy stoure ;  
So now his blustering blast eche coste dooth scoure.

“ The carefull cold hath nypt my rugged rynde,  
And in my face deepe furrowes eld hath pight :  
My head besprent with hoary frost I fynd,  
And by myne eie the Crow his clawe dooth wright :  
Delight is layd abedde ; and pleasure past ;  
No sonne now shines ; cloudes han all overcast.

“ Now leave, ye shepheards boyes, your merry glee ;  
My Muse is hoarse and wearie of thys stounde :  
Here will I hang my pype upon this tree :  
Was never pype of reede did better sounde.  
Winter is come that blowes the bitter blaste,  
And after Winter dreerie death does hast.

“ Gather together ye my little flocke,  
My little flock, that was to me so lief ;  
Let me, ah ! lette me in your foldes ye lock,  
Ere the breme<sup>1</sup> Winter breede you greater griefe.  
Winter is come, that blowes the balefull breath,  
And after Winter commeth timely death.

“ Adieu, delightes, that lulled me asleepe ;  
Adieu, my deare, whose love I bought so deare ;  
Adieu, my little Lambes and loved sheepe ;  
Adieu, ye Woodes, that oft my witnesse were :  
Adieu, good Hobbinoll, that was so true,  
Tell Rosalind, her Colin bids her adieu.”

Before and after the launching of the “ Shepherd’s Calendar ”<sup>2</sup> Spenser was busy with

<sup>1</sup> Rough.

<sup>2</sup> On the “ Shepherd’s Calendar ” see the scattered criticisms of Dryden, which are just and original, and the source from which most modern text-book judgments are derived.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

several works which have been entirely lost. Or did he plan and in part only carry them out, as was the case with the "Fairy Queen," the unfinished works being circulated and lost? Among these may be mentioned "*Stemmata Dudleiana*," presumably a poem on the achievements of the Dudley family, nine English comedies after the Italian model, and "The Dying Pelican." His hopes of preferment were dashed for the time. He seems already to have had enemies at court, though fewer than most literary geniuses have had to encounter. Among these was the influential Treasurer, Lord Burleigh, who probably disapproved of Spenser's connection with Leicester, as he did later of his friendship with Essex. Accordingly he solaced himself with closer devotion to his Muse. His experiments in verse according to classical quantity were no less unhappy than those of Sidney, so much so that it seems incredible that Spenser could have written them. Possibly, however, the struggling aspirant was not yet in a position to be independent of the Harveian despotism.

By this time, however, the "Fairy Queen" had been begun, and a specimen of it submitted to Harvey, who did not attempt to disguise his disapproval.

### III

NOW begins a new phase of the poet's career. It was either in the autumn of 1579 or early in 1580 that Spenser crossed to Ireland, where, with the exception of two long visits to London, he was to spend the

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remaining eighteen years of his life. He went out to Dublin as private secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton, appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland. It may be conjectured that Spenser disliked the courtier's life, but he was not likely to welcome a life which was to prove a dreary exile in an insurgent country apart from his friend Sidney, debarring him from the literary intercourse and sympathy he could have had in plenty in a London which was witnessing the marvellous development of the career of Shakespeare. In his early days there it is likely that he became acquainted with Sir Walter Raleigh. At any rate it is highly probable that such an event as the publication (1580) of the first two books of Montaigne's "Essays" did not escape so keen a student as Spenser. Florio's English translation was not published till 1603, but Spenser almost certainly had enough French to read the original. If he read Montaigne, he would have found that his plan for the "Fairy Queen" had corroboration from Montaigne's high estimate of philosophy as a part of the training of youth. Aristotle, he urges, "endeavoured to instruct Alexander with good precepts concerning valour, prowess, magnanimity, and temperance, and an undaunted assurance not to fear anything." Here we have the "Fairy Queen" in a nutshell.

But other than literary work now engages the poet's attention: there is a very practical side to the life of Spenser. In 1581 he was appointed Clerk of Decrees in the Irish Court

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of Chancery, an office he held for seven years, till 1588. In the same year he received a lease of the lands and abbey of Enniscorthy, in County Wexford ; but as this was too far distant from his work for him to enjoy its amenities, he transferred the lease to another in December. Before the transfer was made he received from London copies of the first reprint of the " Shepherd's Calendar." Next year Lord Grey, who both as man and ruler seems to have been admired by Spenser, was recalled from Ireland. He had been a ruler who erred on the side of severity. One of the seventeen sonnets prefixed to the " Fairy Queen " is addressed to Lord Grey :

Most Noble Lord, the pillor of my life,  
And Patrone of my Muses pupillage ;  
Through whose large bountie, poured on me rife  
In the first season of my feeble age,  
I now doe live, bound yours by vassalage ;  
Sith nothing ever may redeeme, nor reave  
Out of your endlesse debt, so sure a gage,  
Vouchsafe in worth this small guift to receive,  
Which in your noble hands for pledge I leave.  
Of all the rest that I am tyde t' account :  
Rude rymes, the which a rustick Muse did weave  
In savadge soyle, far from Parnasso Mount,  
And roughly wrought in an unlearned Looime :  
The which vouchsafe, dear Lord, your favorable  
doome.

In the " Present State of Ireland " also the poet pays a tribute of respect to his patron, who died in 1593. Spenser stayed on in Ireland. From a work written by Ludovic Bryskett in

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this year (though not published till 1606), entitled "A Discourse of Civil Life," we get a picture of such literary life as Ireland could afford our poet. He describes in the garrulous manner of the time a meeting at his own cottage near Dublin at which a lengthy discussion was held on the subject of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics. Spenser is challenged to give his views, but declines to speak on so comprehensive a subject without preparation, and urges also that he is working at the "Fairy Queen," in which will be found a clear exposition of these subjects. As we shall have no further need to mention Bryskett, it should be said here that he, like many another, wrote elegies on the death of Sidney.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth between official and literary labours Spenser pursued his uneventful way for some seven years. In 1585 Raleigh, who was to visit him in Ireland four years later, was busy planting the colony of Virginia. In 1586 Spenser was at Dublin, whence he addressed a sonnet to Harvey. It was probably in this year that he received a grant of land in Cork, consisting of some three thousand acres, from the forfeited estates of the Earl of Desmond, though he did not at once go to reside there. But the event of that year for Spenser was the death from wounds received at the battle of Zutphen of his hero, patron, and friend, Sir Philip Sidney. His most

<sup>1</sup> Another of Spenser's friends in Ireland was Archbishop Usher, Lord Primate of Armagh, who resented some fair strictures on Spenser's poetry made by Sir William Davenant in his preface to "Gondibert."



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heartfelt elegy to Sidney is to be found in "The Ruins of Time," dedicated to Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, whom Francis Meres mentions as a great patron of poets.

Most gentle spirite, breathed from above  
Out of the bosome of the makers blis,  
In whom all bountie and all vertuous love  
Appeared in their native propertis,  
And did enrich that noble breast of his  
With treasure passing all this worldës worth,  
Worthie of heaven it selfe, which brought it forth.

His blessed spirite, full of power divine  
And influence of all celestiaall grace,  
Loathing this sinfull earth and earthlie slime,  
Fled back too soone unto his native place ;  
Too soone for all that did his love embrace,  
Too soone for all this wretched world, whom he  
Robd of all right and true nobilitie.

Yet, ere his happie soule to heaven went  
Out of this fleshlie gaole, he did devise  
Unto his heavenlie maker to present  
His bodie, as a spotles sacrifice ;  
And chose that guiltie hands of enemies  
Should powre forth th' offering of his guiltles blood :  
So life exchanging for his countries good.

O noble spirite ! live there ever blessed,  
The worlds late wonder, and the heavens new joy ;  
Live ever there, and leave me here distressed  
With mortall cares and cumbrous worlds anoy !  
But, where thou dost that happines enjoy,  
Bid me, O ! bid me quicklie come to thee,  
That happie there I maie thee alwaies see.

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Yet, whilst the fates afford me vitall breath,  
I will it spend in speaking of thy praise,  
And sing to thee, untill that timelie death  
By heavens doome doo ende my earthlie daies :  
Thereto doo thou my humble spirite raise,  
And into me that sacred breath inspire,  
Which thou there breathest perfect and entire.

“Astrophel,” dedicated to the Countess of Essex, and beginning “A gentle shepheard borne in Arcady,” is a more or less conventional lament, a formal thing written because it was expected of him. His heart was, apparently, not in the work. (Is it possible that Shakespeare was thinking of Sidney’s end when he wrote the lines in “Hamlet” :

O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown !  
The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue,  
sword,  
Th’ expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
Th’ observed of all observers ! quite, quite down !

They fit the case like a glove.)

Meanwhile the “Shepherd’s Calendar” had again been reprinted, and Spenser probably took encouragement to proceed with the great work which was to bring him the largest share of his fame. In the next year our Protestant exile in Ireland no doubt heard with satisfaction of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, from whom he had been drawing the Duessa of the “Fairy Queen.” The next event in Spenser’s

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personal history is his succession to the office of Clerk of the Council of Munster, which he obtained by purchase. This was in 1588, the great year of the Armada, of the death of yet another patron, Leicester, of the publication of Montaigne's third book of essays, and of his own removal from Dublin to the Kilcolman estate in Cork. Here he lived in comparative peace for about ten years, though the murmurs of Irish discontent must have been growing louder. It is not likely that he was popular with his native neighbours. Much of the scenery of rivers and woods described in the "Fairy Queen" is drawn from his surroundings at Kilcolman. It is probable that Harvey paid him a visit there, and it is certain that in the next year (1589) Raleigh, himself an "undertaker" who had received forfeited estates near Kilcolman, went to see him.

The "Fairy Queen" to the end of Book III. was read to Raleigh, who, unlike Harvey, gave it his hearty approbation. The visit is described in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again."

### IV

**R**ALEIGH now stepped into the shoes of Sidney in advancing the fortunes of our poet, and took him off to London with his manuscript of the "Fairy Queen" (Books I.-III.), with the express purpose of getting the work published and of introducing the author to the queen. Both these

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objects were attained in 1590. Much water had gone under the bridges since the poet was last in London. Of literary progress let it suffice to say that Shakespeare<sup>1</sup> was now well known as both actor and playwright. But Spenser's new manuscript was to ensure his continuance as poet paramount. The "Fairy Queen" (I.-III.) was published by William Ponsonby, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, and introduced by sonnets from the pens of Raleigh and Harvey. No work could be more gloriously sponsored, or more splendidly received. After two centuries the works of Chaucer had grown almost unintelligible to average readers: here was an excellent poem that all could read. Spenser was hailed by Nash as "the new laureate." There was marked originality in the poem: a new melody, a new and absolutely convincing metre, a rich fancifulness, a lofty spirituality. Yet with its lofty classic ideals, its archaic manner, and its chivalric setting its appeal was undoubtedly rather to the cultured classes than to the mass of Englishmen. But we must go into detail.

Sidney, in a letter to his brother written in October 1580, has the following words: "A moral philosopher, either in the ethic part, when he sets forth virtues or vices and the natures of passions: or in the politic, when he doth . . . meddle sententiously with matters of estate." The passage outlines, almost as if

<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that Spenser was personally acquainted with Shakespeare. Indeed, in "Tears of the Muses" he seems to show a lack of sympathy with the development of the drama.



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Sidney had come fresh from a conference with Spenser, the general plan of the "Fairy Queen." The ethic part was, as we have already shown, to be complete in twelve books ; a second twelve books were to have described the virtues of King Arthur in a public capacity as ruler. Of the twenty-four only six books were completed. The hero is Prince Arthur, who typifies perfect virtue. He becomes enamoured of Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, who appears to him in a dream. He sets out on his journey to her court in Fairy-Land, and finds her holding her annual twelve-day festival. On each of these days a knight undertakes some adventure. Book I. relates how the Red-Cross Knight, allegorically representing Holiness, does service for his mistress Una (True Religion). In Book II. we have the adventures of Sir Guyon (Temperance), in Book III. of the female champion, Britomartis (Chastity). Book IV. contains the legend of Cambell and Triamond, and the allegory is Friendship ; the legend of Artegall (Justice) is told in Book V., and that of Sir Calidore (Courtesy) in Book VI. Each book is divided into twelve cantos. The reader is in a chivalric atmosphere of enchantments, dungeons, fiends, dragons, masques, minstrels, and tilting-yards. Old or young, he will best enjoy the stories, whether of Una and the Red-Cross Knight, of Corceca and Orgoglio, of Britomart or Merlin, of Busyran or Artegall, if he reads them for their natural and direct interest, set off as it is by exquisitely musical verse. The allegory,

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whether moral or historical,<sup>1</sup> may well be left by the young student to take care of itself.

When we come to consider how Spenser worked out his plan, comparison of his work with that of his Italian models, Ariosto and Tasso, is naturally suggested. Ariosto's great work, "Orlando Furioso," that is, Orlando mad with love for Angelica, was written in imitation of the chivalrous romances of Pulci and Boiardo, which were stories of knightly adventures rather than strict epics. It was Ariosto's work that inspired Spenser. As Ariosto threw his predecessors into the shade, Spenser was emulous to "outgo" Ariosto. He read Ariosto and his imitators, and hence the Italian names of Archimago and Orgoglio, of Duessa and Fidessa, and of so many characters in the "Fairy Queen." Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered" also supplied its quota to the "Fairy Queen": the bower of Acrasia, for instance, is nothing but Tasso's Garden of Armida. He differs from his Italian masters in three main points. In the first place, Spenser had recourse to allegory, a device which was foreign to his predecessors. In the second, he intended his work to have a moral purpose and meaning, an intention quite in keeping with the serious spirit of the time in England. He aimed at a popular exposition of moral philosophy, and perhaps rightly, seeing that, as Horace found in Homer a sounder and clearer moral

<sup>1</sup> Space does not suffice to discuss the value of the allegory in the "Fairy Queen" and other of Spenser's works. See Cory, p. 171 of work cited in Bibliography.

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philosopher than either Chrysippus or Crantor, so our own Milton afterwards found in him a "sage and serious poet who I dared be known to say was a better teacher of truth than Scotus or Aquinas." It reads rather quaintly that John Wesley associated the "Fairy Queen" with the Old and New Testament in the course of study he designed for theological students. Let Spenser speak for himself: his aim was "to fashion a gentleman of noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." In the third place, he invented (how we know not) a nine-line stanza, with the ninth an Alexandrine or six-foot verse, a stanza which was a stroke of genius, and has since borne the poet's name.<sup>1</sup>

"It allows of the most majestic volume of sound and the greatest variety of musical effects of any in our language," writes a recent critic of authority. So good was it that Thomson, Byron, Shelley, and Keats all accepted it for sustained works. On the other hand, Spenser imitates his models in two ways. He writes an epic (if epic the "Fairy Queen" may be called, being such a mixture of narrative and allegory) in stanzas. And he adopts his machinery from the literature of chivalry, both directly from Sir Thomas Malory and indirectly from Ariosto and other Italian writers. (His realm of Fairy-Land, it is true, is his own device.) We have the same general atmosphere as Sidney provides in his "Arcadia." It is this setting in a legendary past and a state

It cannot be said to have been taken from the Italians or from Chaucer. See Saintsbury, "Manual of English Prosody," p. 335.

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of society which was then practically outworn that gives the "Fairy Queen" some right to be called an epic. Moreover, the issues are broad: the universal issues of temperance as against incontinence, of holiness as against irreligion, and so on, are in the balance throughout the work. But on the other hand the poem resolves itself into a series of narrative poems relating the adventures of particular knights. It is at this point that Spenser's indebtedness—not generally recognised—to Ovid's "Metamorphoses" (not necessarily to the original, but to English translations) should be pointed out. It is from Ovid that Spenser, like Ariosto, draws much of his romantic story-telling. Moreover, Spenser is a second Ovid, employing all his inventiveness, descriptive and linguistic power, in embellishing his fabulous tales, and caring little for unity if he can tell tales brilliantly. Again, elaborate allegory is not of the grand simplicity which should belong to epic poetry. In many places the allegory is double: there are the moral virtues represented by their knights, and passing historical events, such as the struggle of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, represented by Gloriana (Elizabeth) and Duessa (Mary Stuart).

The subject-matter of the "Fairy Queen" is unique in that it mingles, and mingles with much success, three elements which on a first thought would seem to be dissonant. First, and above all, is the spirit of chivalry, which means in brief the exaltation of the virtues



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of honour, valour, and respect for women, but also an overweening contempt for the lower orders. "Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song." Into this life of warfare Spenser was able to breathe some reality by virtue of his own experiences of contemporary Ireland, where there was always danger to be met with energy and courage. On this chivalric stock the poet skilfully grafts the Platonism in which he was so steeped while at Cambridge, but it is, as was afterwards the case with Milton, a Platonism reconciled with or leading up to Christianity. It was not so difficult to keep the peace between chivalry and Christian Platonism, but the task was to reconcile these two to the sensuous elegance of Italian Renaissance poetry. "He unites," says the late Churton Collins, "like Milton, a sensuousness which borders on the voluptuous with an austere purity of sentiment and principle." But, indeed, the fusion does not seem to be complete : and this produces one of the bizarre effects of the "Fairy Queen."

Here we have a hint that, as with all human creations, there are defects in the poem. Let us look at the chief of these. In the first place, Spenser was a fluent worker, aiming at broad and general effects : his canvas is that of a Verrio or Doré. Naturally he disregards minutiae, and his painting cannot sustain searching criticism. This is not serious : it is even more true of Shakespeare. It is more serious that his characterisation of his knights is lifeless. The

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mechanism by which a knight must act according to the virtue he represents is highly artificial, and recalls the mechanical comedy of Ben Jonson, which will not bear comparison with the more human comedy of Shakespeare. Each of Spenser's knights is a lay figure, an abstraction rather than a man. The modern reader will not go to Spenser for any deep analysis of human passion or character. Next, as has been hinted, there is no real unity in the poem, but we have a series of separate adventures and pictures. It is consequently difficult to read through the whole of the "Fairy Queen." We should frankly accept this difficulty and read two or three episodes at one time, and return to others later. Moreover, all the adventures are very much alike, and the impression of monotony is unavoidable. Allegorising also must tend to monotony: it cannot be successfully sustained through a long work. The advice already given the young reader of letting the allegory take care of itself will be found to be sound. Again, Spenser, in his desire to flow, exercises little self-restraint or judgment. In copying—and he was a huge borrower—he takes anything that hits his fancy, and a great deal of the borrowed matter is imperfectly fused into his story. The "Fairy Queen" is a mass—in great part ill-digested—of scenes, events, and images borrowed from Homer and other Greeks, and from Italian sources; but unlike Milton, the accomplished Greek scholar, Spenser has not learnt how to adapt ancient thoughts

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and expressions, "how to sink them and imbed them in his own." Spenser uses Greek subject-matter, but has learnt very little of Greek self-restraint and severe simplicity of style. A wide range he has, but too often lacks judgment. As to metre and language, we have seen that he avowedly tries to extend the resources of English. But while borrowing from Chaucer and dialect he is unscrupulous in violently forcing words into metre and rhyme. To suit his purposes he will distort accent, or pronunciation, or syntax. His liberty far too often degenerates into licence.

Wherein, then, shall we find the interest of this poem? First, in the vivid moral pictures of manliness as it was understood in the spacious times of Elizabeth, and in its lofty Platonism. Do what he will to realise chivalric times, the poet really has his eye firmly fixed on the characteristic virtues and failings of his heroes, Sidney and Raleigh and Lord Grey, and other worthies, such as Grenville and Howard. And these pictures are not only historically but intrinsically valuable. His Platonism is a tonic to be prescribed for our own age, which cries aloud only for realism. The pure and elevated view of female character which he shared with Sidney is a thing to keep always in sight. It would be difficult to find another such romantic idealist. Next, regarded as a work of art the poem is marvellously stocked with imagination: Spenser is very fertile and rich in invention. How exceptionally keen is

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his sense of beauty, especially of colour, and how intensely real for us can he make the thing he sets out to describe! And strong as is his appeal to the eye, it is even stronger to the ear. The facility and flow and music of the language and metre are unique: they have perhaps no parallel in modern poetry.<sup>1</sup> And, third, though this interest is subsidiary, references to contemporary events, such as the delicate flattery of Elizabeth, whether as Gloriana or Belphebe, or of Lord Grey as Sir Artegall, and the many instances to be drawn from Books IV. to VI., must touch the historical imagination. If Spenser's merit is not greater than it is, it should be remembered that he was a Stanley in a difficult country. He encountered all the difficulties of a pioneer; and, considering this, his shortcomings and imperfections are amazingly few and trivial. He triumphs as only a man of great strength and originality could have triumphed.

What wonder, then, that the poet of the "Fairy Queen" sends an illuminating ray right down the long vista of succeeding English poets? For some twenty or thirty years after Spenser's death his influence was paramount, and one poet after another writes himself down Colin's debtor. William Browne (1588-1643), the author of "Britannia's Pastorals," though indebted in some degree to Chaucer and Shakespeare, especially acknowledges the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor Saintsbury: "The greatest and the first of Elizabethan conductors, an impeccable master of rhythm, time, and tune. This is what English poetry had wanted for nearly two hundred years and had now got."



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teaching of Spenser and Sidney. His style and manner clearly derive from the "Shepherd's Calendar" and the "Fairy Queen." Like Spenser he is "at once a pagan and a Protestant." Giles Fletcher (1588-1623), the religious poet, is another of those who looked up to Spenser as their master, and so was Cowley. Sir William Habington (1605-1654) writes :

What obelisks decreed I fit  
For Spenser's art and Sydney's wit!

Milton in his earlier days was much influenced by the "sage and serious Spenser." But the list is too long to give in detail. Suffice it to mention Henry More (1614-1687), Dryden, Pope, Byron (whose echoes of the "Fairy Queen" and minor poems the late Churton Collins found to be innumerable), Keats, and Tennyson.

The way has now been paved for some selections from the "Fairy Queen." And, first, the opening ten stanzas of Book I., Canto I., which set the Red-Cross Knight and Una well upon their way :

A gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,  
Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,  
Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,  
The cruell markes of many' a bloody fielde ;  
Yet armes till that time did he never wield.  
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,  
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield :  
Full jolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,  
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.

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And on his brest a bloodie Crosse he bore,  
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,  
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,  
And dead, as living, ever him ador'd :  
Upon his shield the like was also scor'd,  
For souveraine hope which in his helpe he had.  
Right faithfull true he was in deede and word,  
But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad ;  
Yet nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad.

Upon a great adventure he was bond,  
That greatest Gloriana to him gave,  
(That greatest Glorious Queene of Faery lond)  
To winne him worshippe, and her grace to have,  
Which of all earthly thinges he most did crave :  
And ever as he rode his hart did earne  
To prove his puissance in battell brave  
Upon his foe, and his new force to learne,  
Upon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearne.

A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,  
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,  
Yet she much whiter ; but the same did hide  
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low ;  
And over all a blacke stole shee did throw :  
As one that inly mournd, so was she sad,  
And heavie sate upon her palfrey slow ;  
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,  
And by her, in a line, a milkewhite lambe she lad.

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,  
She was in life and every vertuous lore ;  
And by descent from Royall lynage came  
Of ancient Kinges and Queenes, that had of yore  
Their scepters stretcht from East to Western shore,  
And all the world in their subjection held ;  
Till that infernall feend with foule uprore

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Forwasted all their land, and them expeld ;  
Whom to avenge she had this Knight from far  
compeld.

Behind her farre away a Dwarfe did lag,  
That lasie seemd, in being ever last,  
Or wearied with bearing of her bag  
Of needments at his backe. Thus as they past,  
The day with cloudes was suddeine overcast,  
And angry Jove an hideous storme of raine  
Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast,  
That everie wight to shrowd it did constrain ;  
And this faire couple eke to shroud themselves were fain.

Enforst to seeke some covert nigh at hand,  
A shadie grove not farr away they spide,  
That promist ayde the tempest to withstand ;  
Whose loftie trees, yclad with sommers pride,  
Did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide,  
Not perceable with power of any starr :  
And all within were pathes and alleies wide,  
With footing worne, and leading inward farr.  
Faire harbour that them seems, so in they entred ar.

And foorth they passe, with pleasure forward led,  
Joying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,  
Which, therein shrouded from the tempest dred,  
Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky.  
Much can they praise the trees so straight and hy,  
The sayling Pine ; the Cedar proud and tall ;  
The vine-propp Elme ; the Poplar never dry ;  
The builder Oake, sole king of forrests all ;  
The Aspine good for staves ; the Cypresse funerall ;

The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours  
And Poets sage ; the Firre that weepeth still :  
The Willow, worne of forlorne Paramours ;

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The Eugh, obedient to the benders will ;  
The Birch for shaftes ; the Sallow for the mill ;  
The Mirrhe sweete-bleeding in the bitter wound ;  
The warlike Beech ; the Ash for nothing ill ;  
The fruitfull Olive ; and the Platane round ;  
The carver Holme ; the Maple seeldom inward sound.

Led with delight, they thus beguile the way,  
Untill the blustering storme is overblowne ;  
When, weening to returne whence they did stray,  
They cannot finde that path, which first was showne,  
But wander too and fro in waies unknowne,  
Furthest from end then, when they neerest weene,  
That makes them doubt their wits be not their owne :  
So many pathes, so many turnings seene,  
That which of them to take in diverse doubt they been.

The story of Braggadocchio masquerading  
as a knight on Sir Guyon's horse should be read  
in Book II., Canto III. In Canto VI. Cymochles  
is led astray by Phædria into her Idle Lake.  
I quote the beginning :

A harder lesson to learne Continence  
In joyous pleasure then in grievous paine ;  
For sweetnesse doth allure the weaker sence  
So strongly, that uneathes <sup>1</sup> it can refraine  
From that which feeble nature covets faine :  
But grieve and wrath, that be her enemies  
And foes of life, she better can abstaine :  
Yet vertue vauntes in both her victories,  
And Guyon in them all shewes goodly maysteries.

Whom bold Cymochles travailing to finde,  
With cruell purpose bent to wreake on him  
The wrath which Atin kindled in his mind,

<sup>1</sup> Scarcely.



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Came to a river, by whose utmost brim  
Wayting to passe, he saw whereas did swim  
Along the shore, as swift as glaunce of eye,  
A litle Gondelay, bedecked trim  
With boughes and arbours woven cunningly,  
That like a litle forrest seemed outwardly.

And therein sate a Lady fresh and fayre,  
Making sweet solace to herselfe alone :  
Sometimes she song as lowd as larke in ayre,  
Sometimes she laught, as merry as Pope Jone ;  
Yet was there not with her else any one,  
That to her might move cause of meriment :  
Matter of merth enough, though there were none,  
She could devise ; and thousand waies invent  
To feede her foolish humour and vaine jolliment.

Which when far off Cymochles heard and saw,  
He lowdly cald to such as were aboard  
The little barke unto the shore to draw,  
And him to ferry over that deepe ford.  
The merry mariner unto his word  
Soone hearkned, and her painted bote streightway  
Turnd to the shore, where that same warlike Lord  
She in receiv'd ; but Atin by no way  
She would admit, albe the knight her much did pray.

Eftsoones her shallow ship away did slide,  
More swift then swallow sheres the liquid skye,  
Withouten oare or Pilot it to guide,  
Or winged canvas with the wind to fly :  
Onely she turnd a pin, and by and by  
It cut away upon the yielding wave,  
Ne cared she her course for to apply ;  
For it was taught the way which she would have,  
And both from rocks and flats it selfe could wisely save.

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And all the way the wanton Damsell found  
New merth her passenger to entertaine ;  
For she in pleasaunt purpose did abound,  
And greatly joyed merry tales to faine,  
Of which a store-house did with her remaine :  
Yet seemed, nothing well they her became ;  
For all her wordes she drownd with laughter vaine,  
And wanted grace in utt'ring of the same,  
That turned all her pleasaunce to a scoffing game.

And other whiles vaine toyes she would devize,  
As her fantasticke wit did most delight :  
Sometimes her head she fondly would aguize <sup>1</sup>  
With gaudy girlonds, or fresh flowrets dight  
About her necke, or rings of rushes plight :  
Sometimes, to do him laugh, she would assay  
To laugh at shaking of the leaves light  
Or to behold the water worke and play  
About her little frigot, therein making way.

Her light behaviour and loose dalliaunce  
Gave wondrous great contentment to the knight,  
That of his way he had no sovenaunce,<sup>2</sup>  
Nor care of vow'd revenge and cruell fight,  
But to weake wench did yield his martiall might :  
So easie was to quench his flamed minde  
With one sweete drop of sensuall delight.  
So easie is t'appease the stormy winde  
Of malice in the calme of pleasaunt womankind.

Diverse discourses in their way they spent ;  
Mongst which Cymochles of her questioned  
Both what she was, and what that usage ment,  
Which in her cott she daily practized ?  
“ Vaine man,” (saide she) “ that wouldest be reckoned

<sup>1</sup> Adorn.

<sup>2</sup> Remembrance.

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A straunger in thy home, and ignoraunt  
Of Phædria, (for so my name is red)  
Of Phædria, thine owne fellow servaunt ;  
For thou to serve Acrasia thy selfe doest vaunt.

“ In this wide Inland sea, that hight by name  
The Idle lake, my wandring ship I row,  
That knowes her port, and thither sayles by ayme,  
Ne care, ne feare I how the wind do blow,  
Or whether swift I wend, or whether slow :  
Both slow and swift alike do serve my tourne ;  
Ne swelling Neptune ne lowd thundring Jove  
Can chaunge my cheare, or make me ever mourne :  
My little boat can safely passe this perilous bourne.”

Whiles thus she talked, and whiles thus she toyd,  
They were far past the passage which he spake,  
And come unto an Island waste and voyd,  
That floted in the midst of that great lake ;  
There her small Gondelay her port did make,  
And that gay payre, issewing on the shore,  
Disburdned her. Their way they forward take  
Into the land that lay them faire before,  
Whose pleasaunce she him shewd, and plentifull  
great store.

It was a chosen plott of fertile land,  
Emongst wide waves sett, like a little nest,  
As if it had by Natures cunning hand  
Bene choycely picked out from all the rest,  
And laid forth for ensample of the best :  
No daintie flowre or herbe that growes on grownd,  
No arborett with painted blossomes drest  
And smelling sweete, but there it might be fownd  
To bud out faire, and throwe her sweete smels al  
arownd.

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No tree whose braunches did not bravely spring ;  
No braunch whereon a fine bird did not sitt ;  
No bird but did her shrill notes sweetely sing ;  
No song but did containe a lovely ditt.  
Trees, braunches, birds, and songs, were framed fitt  
For to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease :  
Carelesse the man soone woxe, and his weake witt  
Was overcome of thing that did him please ;  
So pleased did his wrathfull purpose faire appease.

Thus when shee had his eyes and senses fed  
With false delights, and fild with pleasures vayn,  
Into a shady dale she soft him led,  
And layd him downe upon a grassy playn ;  
And her sweete selfe without dread or disdayn  
She sett beside, laying his head disarmd  
In her loose lap, it softly to sustayn,  
Where soone he slumbred fearing not be harmd :  
The whiles with a love lay she thus him sweetly  
charm'd.

“ Behold, O man ! that toilesome paines doest take,  
The flowrs, the fields, and all that pleasaunt growes,  
How they them selves doe thine ensample make,  
Whiles nothing envious nature them forth throwes  
Out of her fruitfull lap ; how no man knowes,  
They spring, they bud, they blossome fresh and faire,  
And decke the world with their rich pompous showes ;  
Yet no man for them taketh paines or care,  
Yet no man to them can his carefull paines compare.

“ The lilly, Lady of the flowring field,  
The flowre-deluce, her lovely Paramoure,  
Bid thee to them thy fruitlesse labors yield,  
And soone leave off this toylsome weary stoure :  
Loe, loe ! how brave she decks her bounteous bour  
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With silkin curtens and gold coverletts,  
Therein to shrowd her sumptuous Belamoure ;  
Yet nether spinnes nor cards, ne cares nor fretts,  
But to her mother Nature all her care she letts.

“ Why then doest thou, O man ! that of them all  
Art Lord, and eke of nature Soveraine,  
Wilfully make thyselfe a wretched thrall,  
And waste thy joyous howres in needelesse paine,  
Seeking for daunger and adventures vaine ?  
What bootes it al to have, and nothing use ?  
Who shall him rew that swimming in the maine  
Will die for thirst, and water doth refuse ?  
Refuse such fruitlesse toile, and present pleasures  
chuse.”

By this she had him lulled fast asleepe,  
That of no worldly thing he care did take :  
Then she with liquors strong his eies did steepe,  
That nothing should him hastily awake.  
So she him lefte, and did her selfe betake  
Unto her boat again, with which she cleft  
The slouthfull wave of that great griesy lake :  
Soone shee that Island far behind her lefte,  
And now is come to that same place where first she  
weft.<sup>1</sup>

Of Canto VII. I quote the first thirty-four  
stanzas :

Guyon findes Mamon in a delve  
Sunning his threasure hore ;  
Is by him tempted, and led downe  
To see his secrete store.

Was wafted.

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As Pilot well expert in perilous wave,  
That to a stedfast starre his course hath bent,  
When foggy mistes or cloudy tempests have  
The faithfull light of that faire lampe yblent,<sup>1</sup>  
And cover'd heaven with hideous dreriment,  
Upon his card and compas firmes his eye,  
The maysters of his long experiment,  
And to them does the steddy helme apply,  
Bidding his winged vessell fairely forward fly :

So Guyon having lost his trustie guyde,  
Late left beyond that Ydle lake, proceedes  
Yet on his way, of none accompanye ;  
And evermore himselfe with comfort feedes  
Of his own vertues and praise-worthie deedes.  
So, long he yode,<sup>2</sup> yet no adventure found,  
Which fame of her shrill trompet worthy reedes ;<sup>3</sup>  
For still he traveld through wide wastfull ground,  
That nought but desert wilderness shewed all around.

At last he came unto a gloomy glade,  
Cover'd with boughes and shrubs from heavens light,  
Whereas he sitting found in secret shade  
An uncouth, salvage, and uncivile wight,  
Of griesly hew and fowle ill favour'd sight ;  
His face with smoke was tand, and eies were bleard,  
His head and beard with sout were ill bedight,  
His cole-blacke hands did seeme to have ben seard  
In smythes fire-spitting forge, and nayles like clawes  
appeard.

His yron cote, all overgrowne with rust,  
Was underneath enveloped with gold ;  
Whose glistring glosse, darkned with filthy dust,  
Well yet appeared to have beene of old

<sup>1</sup> Blinded.

<sup>2</sup> Went.

<sup>3</sup> Thinks.

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A worke of rich entayle <sup>1</sup> and curious mould,  
Woven with antickes and wyld ymagery ;  
And in his lap a masse of coyne he told,  
And turned upside downe, to feede his eye  
And covetous desire with his huge theasury.

And round about him lay on every side  
Great heapes of gold that never could be spent ;  
Of which some were rude owre, not purfiide  
Of Mulcibers devouring element ;  
Some others were new driven, and distent  
Into great Ingowes and to wedges square ;  
Some in round plates withouten moniment ; <sup>2</sup>  
But most were stampd, and in their metal bare  
The antique shapes of kings and kesars straunge and  
rare.

Soone as he Guyon saw, in great affright  
And haste he rose for to remove aside  
Those pretious hils <sup>3</sup> from straungers envious sight,  
And downe them poured through an hole full wide  
Into the hollow earth, them there to hide.  
But Guyon, lightly to him leaping, stayd  
His hand that trembled as one terrifyde ;  
And though himselfe were at the sight dismayd,  
Yet him perforce restraynd, and to him doubtfull sayd :

“ What art thou, man, (if man at all thou art)  
That here in desert hast thine habitaunce,  
And these rich hils of welth doest hide apart  
From the worldes eye, and from her right usaunce ? ”  
Thereat, with staring eyes fixed askaunce,  
In great disdaine he answerd : “ Hardy Elfe,  
That darest view my direfull countenaunce,  
I read thee rash and heedlesse of thy selfe,  
To trouble my still seate, and heapes of pretious pelfe.

Carving, inlaying.

<sup>2</sup> Device, pattern.

Heaps.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

"God of the world and worldlings I me call,  
Great Mammon, greatest god below the skye,  
That of my plenty poure out unto all,  
And unto none my graces do envye :  
Riches, renowme, and principality,  
Honour, estate, and all this worldes good,  
For which men swinck and sweat incessantly,  
Fro me do flow into an ample flood,  
And in the hollow earth have their eternall brood.

"Wherefore, if me thou deigne to serve and sew,<sup>1</sup>  
At thy commaund lo ! all these mountaines bee :  
Or if to thy great mind, or greedy vew,  
All these may not suffise, there shall to thee  
Ten times so much be nombred francke and free."  
"Mammon," (said he) "thy godheads vaunt is vaine,  
And idle offers of thy golden fee ;  
To them that covet such eye-glutting gaine  
Proffer thy giftes, and fitter servaunts entertaine.

"Me ill besits, that in der-doing<sup>2</sup> armes  
And honours suit my vowed daies do spend,  
Unto thy bounteous baytes and pleasing charmes,  
With which weake men thou witchest, to attend ;  
Regard of worldly mucke doth fowly blend,<sup>3</sup>  
And low abase the high heroicke spright,  
That joyes for crownes and kingdomes to contend :  
Faire shields, gay steedes, bright armes be my  
delight ;  
Those be the riches fit for an advent'rous knight."

"Vaine glorious Elfe," (saide he) "doest not thou  
weet,  
That money can thy wantes at will supply ?  
Sheilds, steeds, and armes, and all things for thee meet,  
It can purvay in twinckling of an eye ;

<sup>1</sup> Follow.

<sup>2</sup> Of derring-do.

<sup>3</sup> Obscure.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

And crownes and kingdomes to thee multiply.  
Do not I kings create, and throw the crowne  
Sometimes to him that low in dust doth ly,  
And him that raignd into his rowme thrust downe,  
And whom I lust do heape with glory and renowne ? ”

“ All otherwise ” (saide he) “ I riches read,  
And deeme them roote of all disquietnesse ;  
First got with guile, and then preserv'd with dread,  
And after spent with pride and lavishnesse,  
Leaving behind them griefe and heavinesse :  
Infinite mischiefes of them doe arize,  
Strife and debate, bloodshed and bitternesse,  
Outrageous wrong, and hellish covetize,  
That noble heart as great dishonour doth despize.

“ Ne thine be kingdomes, ne the scepters thine ;  
But realmes and rulers thou doest both confound,  
And loyall truth to treason doest incline :  
Witnesse the guiltlesse blood pourd oft on ground,  
The crowned often slaine, the slayer cround ;  
The sacred Diademe in peeces rent,  
And purple robe gored with many a wound,  
Castles surprizd, great cities sackt and brent :  
So mak'st thou kings, and gaynest wrongfull  
government.

“ Long were to tell the troublous stormes that tosse  
The private state, and make the life unsweet :  
Who swelling sayles in Caspian sea doth crosse,  
And in frayle wood on Adrian gulf doth fleet,  
Doth not, I weene, so many evils meet.”  
Then Mammon waxing wroth ; “ And why then,” sayd,  
“ Are mortall men so fond and undiscreet  
So evill thing to seeke unto their ayd,  
And having not complaine, and having it upbrayd ? ”

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“Indeede,” (quoth he) “through fowle intemper-  
aunce,

Frayle men are oft captiv’d to covetise ;  
But would they thinke with how small allowaunce  
Untroubled Nature doth her selfe suffise,  
Such superfluities they would despise,  
Which with sad cares empeach our native joyes.  
At the well-head the purest streames arise ;  
But mucky filth his braunching armes annoyes,  
And with uncomely weedes the gentle wave accloyes.

“The antique world, in his first flowring youth,  
Fownd no defect in his Creators grace ;  
But with glad thanks, and unreproved truth,  
The guifts of soveraine bounty did embrace :  
Like Angels life was then mens happy cace ;  
But later ages pride, like corn-fed steed,  
Abusd her plenty and fat swolne encrease  
To all licentious lust, and gan exceed  
The measure of her meane and naturall first need.

“Then gan a cursed hand the quiet wombe  
Of his great Grandmother with steele to wound,  
And the hid treasures in her sacred tombe  
With Sacriledge to dig. Therein he fownd  
Fountaines of gold and silver to abownd,  
Of which the matter of his huge desire  
And pompous pride eftsoones he did compownd ;  
Then avarice gan through his veines inspire  
His greedy flames, and kindled life-devouring fire.”

“Sonne,” (said he then) “lett be thy bitter scorne,  
And leave the rudenesse of that antique age  
To them that liv’d therin in state forlorne :  
Thou, that doest live in later times, must wage

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Thy workes for wealth, and life for gold engage.  
If then thee list my offred grace to use,  
Take what thou please of all this surplusage ;  
If thee list not, leave have thou to refuse :  
But thing refused doe not afterward accuse."

" Me list not " (said the Elfin knight) " receave  
Thing offred, till I know it well be gott ;  
Ne wote I but thou didst these goods bereave  
From rightfull owner by unrighteous lott,  
Or that bloodguiltinesse or guile them blott."  
" Perdy," (quoth he) " yet never eie did vew,  
Ne tong did tell, ne hand these handled not ;  
But safe I have them kept in secret mew  
From hevens sight, and powre of al which them  
poursew."

" What secret place " (quoth he) " can safely hold  
So huge a masse, and hide from heavens eie ?  
Or where hast thou thy wonne,<sup>1</sup> that so much gold  
Thou canst preserve from wrong and robbery ? "  
" Come thou," (quoth he) " and see." So by and by  
Through that thick covert he him led, and fownd  
A darkesome way, which no man could descry,  
That deep descended through the hollow grownd,  
And was with dread and horror compassed arownd.

At length they came into a larger space,  
That stretcht itselfe into an ample playne ;  
Through which a beaten broad high way did trace,  
That streight did lead to Plutoes griesly rayne.  
By that wayes side there sate internall Payne,  
And fast beside him sat tumultuous Strife :  
The one in hand an yron whip did strayne,  
The other brandished a bloody knife ;  
And both did gnash their teeth, and both did threaten life.

<sup>1</sup> Abode.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

On thother side in one consort there sate  
Cruell Revenge, and rancorous Despight,  
Disloyall Treason, and hart-burning Hate ;  
But gnawing Gealosy, out of their sight  
Sitting alone, his bitter lips did bight ;  
And trembling Feare still to and fro did fly,  
And found no place wher safe he shroud him might :  
Lamenting Sorrow did in darknes lye,  
And Shame his ugly face did hide from living eye.

And over them sad horror with grim hew  
Did alwaies sore, beating his yron wings ;  
And after him Owles and Night-ravens flew,  
The hatefull messengers of heavy things,  
Of death and dolor telling sad tidings ;  
Whiles sad Celeno, sitting on a clifte,  
A song of bale and bitter sorrow sings,  
That hart of flint asonder could have rifte ;  
Which having ended after him she flyeth swifte.

All these before the gates of Pluto lay,  
By whom they passing spake unto them nought ;  
But th' Elfin knight with wonder all the way  
Did feed his eyes, and fild his inner thought.  
At last him to a litle dore he brought,  
That to the gate of Hell, which gaped wide,  
Was next adjoyning, ne them parted ought :  
Betwixt them both was but a litle stride,  
That did the house of Richesse from hell-mouth  
divide.

Before the dore sat selfe-consuming Care,  
Day and night keeping wary watch and ward,  
For feare least Force or Fraud should unaware  
Breake in, and spoile the treasure there in gard :



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Ne would he suffer Sleepe once thither-ward  
Approch, albe his drowsy den were next ;  
For next to death is Sleepe to be compard ;  
Therefore his house is unto his annext :  
Here Sleep, ther Richesse, and Hel-gate them both  
betwext.

So soon as Mammon there arrivd, the dore  
To him did open and affoorded way :  
Him followed eke Sir Guyon evermore,  
Ne darkenesse him, ne daunger might dismay.  
Soone as he entred was, the dore streight way  
Did shutt, and from behind it forth there lept  
An ugly feend, more fowle then dismall day,  
The which with monstrous stalke behind him stept,  
And ever as he went dew watch upon him kept.

Well hoped hee, ere long that hardy guest,  
If ever covetous hand, or lustfull eye,  
Or lips he layd on thing that likte him best,  
Or ever sleepe his eie-strings did untye,  
Should be his pray. And therefore still on hye  
He over him did hold his cruell clawes,  
Threatning with greedy gripe to doe him dye,  
And rend in peeces with his ravenous pawes,  
If ever he transgrest the fatall Stygian lawes.

That houses forme within was rude and strong,  
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,  
From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong  
Emboist with massy gold of glorious guifte,  
And with rich metall loaded every rifte,  
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threat ;  
And over them Arachne high did lifte  
Her cunning web, and spread her subtile nett,  
Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black  
then Jett.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Both roofe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,  
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,  
And hid in darkenes, that none could behold  
The hew thereof ; for vew of cherefull day  
Did never in that house it selfe display,  
But a faint shadow of uncertein light :  
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away,  
Or as the Moone, cloathed with cloudy night,  
Does show to him that walkes in feare and sad  
affright.

In all that rowme was nothing to be seene  
But huge great yron chests, and coffers strong,  
All bard with double bends, that none could weene  
Them to efforce by violence or wrong :  
On every side they placed were along ;  
But all the grownd with sculs was scattered,  
And dead mens bones, which round about were flong ;  
Whose lives, it seemed, whilome there were shed,  
And their vile carcasses now left unburied.

They forward passe ; ne Guyon yet spoke word,  
Till that they came unto an yron dore,  
Which to them opened of his owne accord,  
And shewd of richesse such exceeding store,  
As eie of man did never see before,  
Ne ever could within one place be fownd,  
Though all the wealth which is, or was of yore,  
Could gathered be through all the world arownd,  
And that above were added to that under grownd.

The charge thereof unto a covetous Spright  
Commaunded was, who thereby did attend,  
And warily awaited day and night,  
From other covetous feends it to defend,

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Who it to rob and ransacke did intend.  
Then Mammon, turning to that warriour, said,  
“ Loe ! here the worldes blis : loe ! here the end,  
To which al men doe ayme, rich to be made :  
Such grace now to be happy is before thee laid.”

“ Certes,” (sayd he) “ I n’ill <sup>1</sup> thine offred grace,  
Ne to be made so happy doe intend :  
Another blis before mine eyes I place,  
Another happines, another end.  
To them that list these base regards I lend ;  
But I in armes, and in atchievements brave,  
Do rather choose my flitting houres to spend,  
And to be Lord of those that riches have,  
Then them to have my selfe, and be their servile  
sclave.”

Thereat the feend his gnashing teeth did grate,  
And griev’d so long to lacke his greedie pray ;  
For well he weened that so glorious bayte  
Would tempt his guest to take thereof assay ;  
Had he so doen, he had him snatcht away,  
More light then Culver <sup>2</sup> in the Faulcons fist.  
Eternall God thee save from such decay !  
But, whenas Mammon saw his purpose mist,  
Him to entrap unwares another way he wist.

In Book IV., Canto X., Stanza XXI. sqq., are described the gardens of Venus :

“ Thus having past all perill, I was come  
Within the compasse of that Islands space ;  
The which did seeme, unto my simple doome,  
The onely pleasant and delightfull place

<sup>1</sup> Wish not.

<sup>2</sup> Dove.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

That ever troden was of footings trace :  
For all that nature by her mother-wit  
Could frame in earth, and forme of substance base,  
Was there ; and all that nature did omit,  
Art, playing second natures part, supplied it.

“ No tree, that is of count, in greenewood growes,  
From lowest Juniper to Ceder tall,  
No flowre in field, that daintie odour throwes,  
And deckes his branch with blossomes over all,  
But there was planted, or grew naturall :  
Nor sense of man so coy and curious nice,  
But there mote find to please it selfe withall ;  
Nor hart could wish for any queint device,  
But there it present was, and did fraile sense entice.

“ In such luxurious plentie of all pleasure,  
It seem'd a second paradise to ghesse,<sup>1</sup>  
So lavishly enricht with Natures threasure,  
That if the happie soules, which doe possesse  
Th' Elysian fields and live in lasting blesse,  
Should happen this with living eye to see,  
They soone would loath their lesser happinesse,  
And wish to life return'd againe to bee,  
That in this joyous place they mote have joyance free.

“ Fresh shadowes, fit to shroud from sunny ray ;  
Faire lawnds, to take the sunne in season dew ;  
Sweet springs, in which a thousand Nymphs did play ;  
Soft rombling brookes, that gentle slomber drew ;  
High reared mounts, the lands about to vew ;  
Low looking dales, disloignd<sup>2</sup> from common gaze ;  
Delightfull bowres, to solace lovers trew ;  
False Labyrinthes, fond runners eyes to daze ;  
All which by nature made did nature selfe amaze.

<sup>1</sup> Guess, deem.

<sup>2</sup> Separated.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

“ And all without were walkes and alleyes dight  
With divers trees enrang’d in even rankes ;  
And here and there were pleasant arbors pight,<sup>1</sup>  
And shadie seates, and sundry flowring bankes,  
To sit and rest the walkers wearie shankes :  
And therein thousand payres of lovers walkt,  
Praying their god, and yeelding him great thanks,  
Ne ever ought but of their true loves talkt,  
Ne ever for rebuke or blame of any baltk.<sup>2</sup>

“ All these together by themselves did sport  
Their spotlesse pleasures and sweet loves content.  
But, farre away from these, another sort  
Of lovers lincked in true harts consent,  
Which loved not as these for like intent,  
But on chast vertue grounded their desire,  
Farre from all fraud or fayned blandishment ;  
Which, in their spirits kindling zealous fire,  
Brave thoughts and noble deedes did evermore aspire.

“ Such were great Hercules and Hyllus deare,  
Trew Jonathan and David trustie tryde,  
Stout Theseus and Pirithous his feare,<sup>3</sup>  
Pylades and Orestes by his syde ;  
Myld Titus and Gesippus without pryde ;  
Damon and Pythias, whom death could not sever :  
All these, and all that ever had bene tyde  
In bands of friendship, there did live for ever ;  
Whose lives although decay’d, yet loves decayed never.

“ Which when as I, that never tasted blis  
Nor happie howre, beheld with gazefull eye,  
I thought there was none other heaven then this ;  
And gan their endlesse happinesse envye,

<sup>1</sup> Placed.

<sup>2</sup> Were at cross purposes.

<sup>3</sup> Companion.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

That being free from feare and gealosye  
Might frankly there their loves desire possesse ;  
Whilest I, through paines and perlous jeopardie,  
Was forst to seeke my lifes deare patronnesse :  
Much dearer be the things which come through hard  
distresse.

“ Yet all those sights, and all that else I saw,  
Might not my steps withhold, but that forthright  
Unto that purposd place I did me draw,  
Where as my love was lodged day and night,  
The temple of great Venus, that is hight  
The Queene of beautie, and of love the mother,  
There worshipped of every living wight ;  
Whose goodly workmanship farre past all other  
That ever were on earth, all were they set together. ”

Most of the year 1591 finds Spenser still in London enjoying his triumphs. In February, by the queen herself, he was awarded a pension of £50 a year. By December 27, however, as is proved by the dedication to “ Colin Clout,” he is back again at Kilcolman, probably not before he had seen Sidney’s “ Astrophel and Stella ” published in London. During 1591 William Ponsonby, his enthusiastic publisher, collected and issued a number of Spenser’s minor poems, which had mostly for some time been passing from hand to hand in manuscript form, under the general title “ Complaints,” which, as has been said, recalls du Bellay’s “ Regrets.” The works contained are “ The Ruins of Time,” “ The Tears of the Muses,” “ Vergil’s Gnat,” “ Prosopopoia, or Mother

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Hubberd's Tale," "The Ruins of Rome" (by du Bellay), "Muiopotmos, or The Tale of the Butterflie," "Visions of the World's Vanitie," "Bellayes Visions," and "Petrarches Visions."

The "Ruins of Time" is an elegy, dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke, on the death of her brother, Sidney. "There be long sithens deepe sowed in my brest the seede of most entire love and humble affection unto that most brave Knight, your noble brother deceased," he writes in his dedication. The poem is "speciallie intended to the renowning of that noble race, from which both you and he sprong, and to the eternizing of some of the chiefe of them late deceased." Space is wanting for quotation from this poem or from the "Tears of the Muses," dedicated to Lady Strange in acknowledgment of "both your particular bounties, and also some private bands of affinitie, which it hath pleased your Ladyship to acknowledge." The poem deplores in a despondent tone<sup>1</sup> the low intellectual standard of the time, and was obviously written before literary happenings had begun to herald the brilliant Elizabethan day which was already breaking in 1590. Of the other minor works mention must be made of "Prosopopoia, or Mother Hubberd's Tale." It is dedicated to Lady Compton and Mountegle, in order to "make knowne to your Ladiship the humble affection and faithfull duetie, which I have

<sup>1</sup> This despondency need not surprise us. It seems to be the poet's privilege to complain of the public's indifference to "the humble slighted shepherd's trade."

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

alwaies professed, and am bound to beare to that House, from whence yee spring." Here are the opening lines, apparently suggested by the setting of the stories in Boccaccio's "Decameron":

It was the month in which the righteous Maide,  
That for disdaine of sinfull worlds upbraide  
Fled back to heaven, whence she was first conceived,  
Into her silver bowre the Sunne received ;  
And the hot Syrian Dog on him awayting,  
After the chafed Lyons cruell bayting,  
Corrupted had th' ayre with his noysome breath,  
And powr'd on th' earth plague, pestilence, and death.  
Emongst the rest a wicked maladie  
Raign'd emongst men, that manie did to die,  
Depriv'd of sense and ordinarie reason,  
That it to Leaches seemed strange and geason.<sup>1</sup>  
My fortune was, mongst manie others moe,  
To be partaker of their common woe ;  
And my weake bodie, set on fire with griefe,  
Was rob'd of rest and naturall reliefe.  
In this ill plight there came to visite mee  
Some friends, who, sorie my sad case to see,  
Began to comfort me in chearfull wise,  
And meanes of gladsome solace to devise :  
But seeing kindly sleep refuse to doe  
His office, and my feeble eyes forgoe,  
They sought my troubled sense how to deceave  
With talke, that might unquiet fancies reave ;  
And, sitting all in seates about me round,  
With pleasant tales (fit for that idle stound)  
They cast in course to waste the wearie howres.  
Some tolde of Ladies, and their Paramoures ;

<sup>1</sup> Rare.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Some of brave Knights, and their renowned Squires ;  
Some of the Faeries and their strange attires ;  
And some of Giaunts, hard to be beleaved ;  
That the delight thereof me much releaved.  
Amongst the rest a good old woman was,  
Hight Mother Hubberd, who did farre surpas  
The rest in honest mirth, that seem'd her well :  
She, when her turne was come her tale to tell,  
Tolde of a strange adventure, that betided  
Betwixt the Foxe and th' Ape by him misguided ;  
The which, for that my sense it greatly pleased,  
All were my spirite heavie and deseased,  
Ile write in termes as she the same did say,  
So well as I her words remember may.  
No Muses aide me needes heretoo to call ;  
Base is the style, and matter meane withall.

This poem is interesting for its easy style, the social pictures it draws, and from the fact that it is Spenser's best imitation of Chaucer. This year (1591) probably also saw the publication of "Daphnaïda," "an Elegie upon the death of the noble and vertuous Douglas Howard, daughter and heire of Henry Lord Howard, Viscount Byndon, and wife of Arthur Georges, Esquire." This is a noteworthy poem, diffuse in style, as usual, but facile and melodious. It is perhaps in connection with the dirge or pastoral elegy that Spenser did most service to English poetry. He wrote at least two separate elegies, the "Astrophel," which has already been mentioned, and "Daphnaïda," and others embedded in other poems. This form rose out of the pastoral, but is nobler than its origin.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

If only for the beautiful English poems it has suggested—the “*Lycidas*” of Milton, the “*Adonais*” of Shelley, the “*Thyrsis*” of Matthew Arnold, and we may even add the “*In Memoriam*” of Tennyson—Spenser’s “*Daphnaïda*” deserves a crown. We quote stanzas V. and VI. Alcyon, a grieving shepherd, pressed to tell the cause of his grief, proceeds ; we come in upon him in the middle of his plaint.

### V

“Hencefoorth I hate what ever Nature made,  
And in her workmanship no pleasure finde,  
For they be all but vaine, and quickly fade ;  
So soone as on them blowes the Northern winde,  
They tarrie not, but flit and fall away,  
Leaving behind them nought but grieve of minde,  
And mocking such as thinke they long will stay.

“I hate the heaven, because it doth withhold  
Me from my love, and eke my love from me ;  
I hate the earth, because it is the mold  
Of fleshly slime and fraile mortalitie ;  
I hate the fire, because to nought it flyes ;  
I hate the Ayre, because sighes of it be ;  
I hate the Sea, because it teares supplyes.

“I hate the day, because it lendeth light  
To see all things, and not my love to see ;  
I hate the darknesse and the drery night,  
Because they breed sad balefulnesse in mee ;  
I hate all times, because all times doo flye  
So fast away, and may not stayed bee,  
But as a speedie post that passeth by.

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“ I hate to speake, my voyce is spent with crying ;  
I hate to heare, lowd plaints have duld mine eares ;  
I hate to tast, for food withholds my dying ;  
I hate to see, mine eyes are dimd with teares ;  
I hate to smell, no sweet on earth is left ;  
I hate to feele, my flesh is numbd with feares :  
So all my senses from me are bereft.

“ I hate all men, and shun all womankinde ;  
The one, because as I they wretched are ;  
The other, for because I doo not finde  
My love with them, that wont to be their Starre :  
And life I hate, because it will not last ;  
And death I hate, because it life doth marre ;  
And all I hate that is to come or past.

“ So all the world, and all in it I hate,  
Because it changeth ever too and fro,  
And never standeth in one certaine state,  
But still unstedfast, round about doth goe  
Like a Mill-whee in midst of miserie,  
Driven with streames of wretchednesse and woe,  
That dying lives, and living still does dye.

“ So doo I live, so doo I daylie die,  
And pine away in self-consuming paine !  
Sith she that did my vitall powres supplie,  
And feeble spirits in their force maintaine,  
Is fetcht fro me, why seeke I to prolong  
My wearie daies in dolor and disdaine !  
Weep, Shepheard ! weep, to make my undersong,

### VI

“ Why doo I longer live in lifes despight,  
And doo not dye then in despight of death ;

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Why doo I longer see this loathsome light  
And doo in darknesse not abridge my breath,  
Sith all my sorrow should have end thereby,  
And cares finde quiet ! Is it so uneath<sup>1</sup>  
To leave this life, or dolorous to dye ?

“ To live I finde it deadly dolorous,  
For life drawes care, and care continuall woe ;  
Therefore to dye must needes be joyeous,  
And wishfull thing this sad life to forgoe :  
But I must stay ; I may it not amend,  
My Daphne hence departing bad me so ;  
She bad me stay, till she for me did send.

“ Yet, whilest I in this wretched vale doo stay  
My wearie feete shall ever wandring be,  
That still I may be readie on my way  
When as her messenger doth come for me ;  
Ne will I rest my feete for feeblenesse,  
Ne will I rest my limmes for frailtie,  
Ne will I rest mine eyes for heavinesse.

“ But, as the mother of the Gods, that sought  
For faire Eurydice, her daughter deere,  
Throughout the world, with wofull heaveie thought ;  
So will I travell whilest I tarrie heere,  
Ne will I lodge, ne will I ever lin,<sup>2</sup>  
Ne, when as drouping Titan draweth neere  
To loose his teeme, will I take up my Inne.

“ Ne sleepe (the harbenger of wearie wights)  
Shall ever lodge upon mine ey-lids more ;  
Ne shall with rest refresh my fainting sprights,  
Nor failing force to former strength restore :  
But I will wake and sorrow all the night

<sup>1</sup> Hard.

<sup>2</sup> Cease.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

With Philumene, my fortune to deplore ;  
With Philumene, the partner of my plight.

“ And ever as I see the starres to fall,  
And under ground to goe to give them light  
Which dwell in darknes, I to minde will call  
How my fair Starre (that shinde on me so bright)  
Fell sodainly and faded under ground ;  
Since whose departure, day is turnd to night,  
And night without a Venus starre is found.

“ But soone as day doth shew his deawie face,  
And calls foorth men unto their toylsome trade,  
I will withdraw me to some darksome place,  
Or some deepe cave, or solitarie shade ;  
There will I sigh, and sorrow all day long,  
And the huge burden of my cares unlade.  
Weep, Shepheard ! weep, to make my undersong.”

### V

**I**N 1592, apparently disabused of the charm of court life, with its intrigues, scandals, and detraction, Spenser is back again in Ireland. Sidney's expression of the tediousness of courtiership applies to the case of his friend :

Unhappy wight, born to disastrous end,  
That doth his life in so long tendence spend.

In spite, however, of mild complaints of envious usage uttered by Spenser, it does not seem that for so illustrious an author he suffered much from enmity. He was apparently not aggressive, but possessed of a sweet nature.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

It was about this time that "Colin Clout's Come Home Again" was written, though it was not published till 1595. In it Spenser gives an account of his stay in London, and naturally dedicates the work to Sir Walter Raleigh. It has been said that the poem "is eminent for fine marine painting." That this is true will be proved by the following passage, in which there appear to be numerous borrowings from Ovid :

"So to the sea we came ; the sea, that is  
A world of waters heaped up on hie,  
Rolling like mountaines in wide wilderness,  
Horrible, hideous, roaring with hoarse crie."

"And is the sea (quoth Coridon) so fearfull ?"

"Fearful much more (quoth he) then hart can fear :  
Thousand wyld beasts with deep mouthes gaping direfull  
Therin stil wait poore passengers to teare.  
Who life doth loath, and longs death to behold,  
Before he die, alreadie dead with feare,  
And yet would live with heart halfe stonie cold,  
Let him to sea, and he shall see it there.  
And yet as ghastly dreadfull, as it seemes,  
Bold men, presuming life for gaine to sell,  
Dare tempt that gulf, and in those wandring stremes  
Seek waies unknowne, waies leading down to hell.  
For, as we stood there waiting on the strond,  
Behold ! an huge great vessell to us came,  
Dauncing upon the waters back to lond,  
As if it scornd the daunger of the same ;  
Yet was it but a wooden frame and fraile,  
Glewed together with some subtile matter.  
Yet had it armes and wings, and head and taile,  
And life to move it selfe upon the water.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Strange thing ! how bold and swift the monster was,  
That neither car'd for wynd, nor haile, nor raine,  
Nor swelling waves, but thorough them did passe  
So proudly, that she made them roare againe.  
The same aboard us gently did receave,  
And without harme us farre away did beare,  
So farre that land, our mother, us did leave,  
And nought but sea and heaven to us appeare.  
Then hartlesse quite, and full of inward feare,  
That shepheard I besought to me to tell,  
Under what skie, or in what world we were,  
In which I saw no living people dwell.  
Who, me recomforting all that he might,  
Told me that that same was the Regiment  
Of a great shepheardesse, that Cynthia hight,  
His liege, his Ladie, and his lifes Regent.—

“ If then (quoth I) a shepheardesse she bee,  
Where be the flockes and heards, which she doth keep ?  
And where may I the hills and pastures see,  
On which she useth for to feed her sheepe ? ”

“ These be the hills (quoth he) the surges hie,  
On which faire Cynthia her heards doth feed :  
Her heards be thousand fishes with their frie,  
Which in the bosome of the billowes breed.  
Of them the shepheard which hath charge in chief,  
Is Triton, blowing loud his wreathed horne :  
At sound whereof, they all for their relief  
Wend too and fro at evening and at morne.  
And Proteus eke with him does drive his heard  
Of stinking Seales and Porcpisces together,  
With hoary head and deawy dropping beard,  
Compelling them which way he list, and whether.  
And, I among the rest, of many least,  
Have in the Ocean charge to me assignd ;  
Where I will live or die at her behest,

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

And serve and honour her with faithfull mind.  
Besides an hundred Nymphs all heavenly borne,  
And of immortall race, doo still attend  
To wash faire Cynthiaes sheep, when they be shorne,  
And fold them up, when they have made an end.  
Those be the shepheards which my Cynthia serve  
At sea, beside a thousand moe at land :  
For land and sea my Cynthia doth deserve  
To have in her commandement at hand."

Thereat I wondred much, till, wondring more  
And more, at length we land far off descryde :  
Which sight much gladed me ; for much afore  
I feard, least land we never should have eyde :  
Thereto our ship her course directly bent,  
As if the way she perfectly had knowne.  
We Lunday passe ; by that same name is ment  
An island, which the first to west was showne.  
From thence another world of land we kend,  
Floting amid the sea in jeopardie,  
And round about with mightie white rocks hemd,  
Against the seas encroching crueltye.  
Those same, the shepherd told me, were the fields  
In which dame Cynthia her landheards fed ;  
Faire goodly fields, then which Armulla yields  
None fairer, nor more fruitfull to be red :  
The first, to which we nigh approched, was  
An high headland thrust far into the sea,  
Like to an horne, whereof the name it has,  
Yet seemed to be a goodly pleasant lea :  
There did a loftie mount at first us greet,  
Which did a stately heape of stones upreare,  
That seemd amid the surges for to fleet,  
Much greater then that frame, which us did beare ;  
There did our ship her fruitfull wombe unlade,  
And put us all ashore on Cynthia's land.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Another specimen has been given above, and it has been shown that even so late as this the poet was still faithful to the memory of his Rosalind. Now, however, a new love motive begins. It was at the end of 1592 or the beginning of 1593 that Spenser formed an attachment for Elizabeth Boyle, of Kilcoran, near Youghal, in the county of Cork, and therefore a neighbour. The year 1593 was a year of unsuccessful and agonising courtship, and while Shakespeare was publishing "Venus and Adonis" Spenser was recording his lover's emotions in a series of sonnets which he called "Amoretti," and finally published with Ponsonby in 1595 along with "Colin Clout" and the "Epithalamion." The course of the wooing during this year is described in fifty-eight sonnets beginning with number IV.; "New yeare, forth looking out of Janus gate." This middle-class maid was not soon to be softened by warm tears, often shed. Meanwhile his hopes and fears and despairing sighs interfered with his work on the continuation of the "Fairy Queen." To make matters worse, his great friend Lord Grey died at this time. At last, however, his love was accepted, as is told in the twenty-five sonnets LXIII. to the end. Here is Sonnet LXIII. :

After long stormes and tempests sad assay,  
Which hardly I endured heretofore,  
In dread of death, and daungerous dismay,  
With which my silly barke was tossed sore :  
I doe at length descry the happy shore,

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

In which I hope ere long for to arryve :

Fayre soyle it seemes from far, and fraught with  
store

Of all that deare and daynty is alyve.

Most happy he ! that can at last atchyeve

The joyous safety of so sweet a rest ;

Whose least delight sufficeth to deprive

Remembrance of all paines which him opprest.

All paines are nothing in respect of this ;

All sorrowes short that gaine eternall blisse.

It cannot be said that the sonnet was an ideal form for Spenser to work in.<sup>1</sup> His was an exuberant genius, which found irksome the restraint of the fourteen-line limit. Spenser was not chastened into careful expression either by his Greek or his Italian studies. Sidney adapted himself more successfully. Spenser's sonnets naturally show much of their literary ancestry. In Provence somewhere about the thirteenth century there had been established a conventional theory of love. It was in accordance with this that Dante immortalised his Beatrice and Petrarch his Laura. Woman was exalted and sublimated into an object of distant devotion. In this Provençal mode the Tuscan poets of necessity devoted, or professed to devote, themselves to some such ideal object of affection. It is not easy to detect in each case how far the sentiment was real or pretended. Real it seems to have been in the case of Spenser's feeling for Elizabeth Boyle, and also

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Courthope finds the "Amoretti" no better than the average compositions of the class then fashionable.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

—though there are critics who have thought otherwise—Sidney's for Stella. Not only was the love convention borrowed directly from Italy, but also the idea of a sonnet sequence was imported thence into England by Surrey in his series to Geraldine. After Spenser the form was used by Constable (to his Diana) and others. We quote two sonnets illustrating the rejected lover, and two written after his lady's relenting.

### XLV

Leave, lady ! in your glasse of cristall clene,  
Your goodly selfe for evermore to vew :  
And in my selfe, my inward selfe, I meane,  
Most lively lyke behold your semblant trew.  
Within my hart, though hardly it can shew  
Thing so divine to vew of earthly eye,  
The fayre Idea of your celestiaall hew  
And every part remaines immortally :  
And were it not that, through your cruelty,  
With sorrow dimmed and deform'd it were,  
The goodly ymage of your visnomy,<sup>1</sup>  
Clearer than cristall, would therein appere.

But, if your selfe in me ye playne will see,  
Remove the cause by which your fayre beames  
darkned be.

### XLVI

When my abodes prefixed time is spent,  
My cruell fayre streight bids me wend my way :  
But then from heaven most hideous stormes are sent,  
As willing me against her will to stay.  
Whom then shall I, or heaven or her, obey ?  
The heavens know best what is the best for me.

Visage, face.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

But as she will, whose will my life doth sway,  
My lower heaven, so it perforce must bee.  
But ye high heavens, that all this sorowe see,  
Sith all your tempests cannot hold me backe,  
Aswage your storms ; or else both you, and she,  
Will both together me too sorely wracke.

Enough it is for one man to sustaine  
The stormes, which she alone on me doth raine.

### LXXX

After so long a race as I have run  
Through Faery land, which those six books compile,  
Give leave to rest me being halfe fordonne,  
And gather to myselfe new breath awhile.  
Then, as a steed refreshed after toyle,  
Out of my prison I will breake anew ;  
And stoutly will that second worke assoyle,  
With strong endeavour and attention dew.  
Till then give leave to me, in pleasant mew<sup>1</sup>  
To sport my muse, and sing my loves sweet praise ;  
The contemplation of whose heavenly hew,  
My spirit to an higher pitch will rayse,  
But let her prayses yet be low and meane,  
Fit for the handmayd of the Faery Queene.

### LXXXI

Fayre is my love, when her fayre golden heares  
With the loose wynd ye waving chance to marke ;  
Fayre, when the rose in her red cheekes appears ;  
Or in her eyes the fyre of love does sparke.  
Fayre, when her brest, lyke a rich laden barke,  
With pretious merchandize she forth doth lay ;

<sup>1</sup> Prison.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Fayre, when that cloud of pryde, which oft doth dark  
Her goodly light, with smiles she drives away.  
But fayrest she, when so she doth display  
The gate with pearles and rubyes richly dight ;  
Throgh which her words so wise do make their way  
To beare the message of her gentle spright.

The rest be works of natures wonderment :  
But this the worke of harts astonishment.

In the last but one sonnet just quoted the completion of Books IV.-VI. of the "Fairy Queen" is mentioned: the happy issue of his love affair had enabled him to complete the composition of so much of his task. In Book VI., Canto X., Stanza XXV., his lady-love is introduced as worthy to be counted with the three Graces.

### XXV

"Such were those Goddesses which ye did see ;  
But that fourth Mayd, which there amidst them  
traced,

Who can aread what creature mote she bee,  
Whether a creature, or a goddesse graced  
With heavenly gifts from heven first enraced ?  
But what so sure she was, she worthy was  
To be the fourth with those three other placed :  
Yet was she certes but a countrey lasse ;  
Yet she all other countrey lasses farre did passe :

### XXVI

"So farre, as doth the daughter of the day  
All other lesser lights in light excell ;  
So farre doth she in beautyfull array  
Above all other lasses beare the bell ;

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Ne lesse in vertue that beseemes her well  
Doth she excede the rest of all her race,  
For which the Graces, that here wont to dwell,  
Have for more honor brought her to this place,  
And graced her so much to be another Grace."

On June 11 of 1594 his long courtship culminated in marriage, from which sprang issue of two, or perhaps three children. This marriage he nobly celebrates in his "Epithalamion," or bridal song, describing in detail the events of his wedding-day. It may be said at once that it is the most beautiful of bridal songs, a magnificent composition, melodious with its descriptive echo line at the end of each of the long stanzas, refined and graceful, and in the matter of delicacy a pleasing contrast to other similar poems. Succeeding poets felt its charm. Milton imitates its metre, though not pedantically, in "Lycidas" and in "At a Solemn Music" (beginning "Blest pair of Sirens"), so effectively set to music by Sir Hubert Parry. In Dryden's two odes in honour of St. Cecilia, "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day" (1687) and "Alexander's Feast, or The Power of Music" (1697), can be traced Spenserian influence; and the same may be said of Tennyson's "Ode on the Duke of Wellington." The ancient classical poem which naturally challenges comparison is the latter part of Catullus LXIV., on the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the refrain of which, repeated every four, five, or six lines, is "Currite ducentes subtegmina, currite, fusi"—"Trail ye a long-drawn thread

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

and run with destiny, spindles." It is the Fates who, the gods having taken their places among the mortal wedding-guests, chant the destinies of Peleus and of his unborn son, Achilles. The stanzas of Spenser's poem are either of seventeen, eighteen, or nineteen lines. The lines are iambic pentameters, varied with trimeters at lines 6, 11, and 16 or 17. In the stanza beginning "But if ye saw that which no eyes can see" we have the typical lofty love sentiment he derived from Plato, Petrarch, and the Petrarchian school. The "Epithalamion" is given in its entirety.

## EPITHALAMION

Ye learned sisters, which have oftentimes<sup>a</sup>  
Beene to me ayding, others to adorne,<sup>b</sup>  
Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefull rymes,<sup>a</sup>  
That even the greatest did not greatly scorne<sup>c</sup>  
To heare their names sung in your simple layes,<sup>c</sup>  
But joyed in their praise ;<sup>c</sup>  
And when ye list your owne mishaps to mourne,<sup>b</sup>  
Which death, or love, or fortunes wreck did rayse,<sup>c</sup>  
Your string could soone to sadder tenor turne,<sup>b</sup>  
And teach the woods and waters to lament<sup>d</sup>  
Your dolefull dreriment :<sup>d</sup>  
Now lay those sorrowfull complaints aside ;<sup>e</sup>  
And, having all your heads with girlands crownd,  
Helpe me mine owne loves prayes to resound ;  
Ne let the same of any be envide :  
So Orpheus did for his owne bride !  
So I unto my selfe alone will sing ;  
The woods shall to me answer, and my Eccho ring.

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Early, before the worlds light-giving lampe  
 His golden beame upon the hils doth spred,  
 Having disperst the nights unchearefull dampe,  
 Doe ye awake ; and, with fresh lusty-hed,  
 Go to the bowre of my beloved love,  
 My truest turtle dove ;  
 Bid her awake ; for Hymen is awake,  
 And long since ready forth his maske to move,  
 With his bright Tead <sup>1</sup> that flames with many a flake,  
 And many a bachelor to waite on him,  
 In theyr fresh garments trim.  
 Bid her awake therefore, and soone her dight,  
 For lo ! the wished day has come at last,  
 That shall, for all the paynes and sorrowes past,  
 Pay to her usury of long delight :  
 And, whylest she doth her dight,  
 Doe ye to her of joy and solace sing,  
 That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Bring with you all the Nymphes that you can heare  
 Both of the rivers and the forrests greene,  
 And of the sea that neighbours to her neare :  
 Al with gay girlands goodly wel beseene.  
 And let them also with them bring in hand  
 Another gay girland,  
 For my fayre love, of lillyes and of roses,  
 Bound truelove wize, with a blew silke riband.  
 And let them make great store of bridale poses,  
 And let them eeke bring store of other flowers,  
 To deck the bridale bowers.  
 And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,  
 For feare the stones her tender foot should wrong,  
 Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,  
 And diapred lyke the discolored <sup>2</sup> mead.

<sup>1</sup> Torch.

<sup>2</sup> Many-coloured.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Which done, doe at her chamber dore awayt,  
For she will waken strait ;  
The whiles doe ye this song unto her sing,  
The woods shall to you answer, and your Eccho ring.

Ye Nymphes of Mulla, which with carefull heed  
The silver scaly trouts doe tend full well,  
And greedy pikes which use therein to feed ;  
(Those trouts and pikes all others doo excell ;)  
And ye likewise, which keepe the rushy lake,  
Where none doo fishes take ;  
Bynd up the locks the which hang scatterd light,  
And in his waters, which your mirror make,  
Behold your faces as the christall bright,  
That when you come whereas my love doth lie,  
No blemish she may spie.  
And eke, ye lightfoot mayds, which keepe the dore,  
That on the hoary mountayne used to towre ;  
And the wylde wolves, which seeke them to deuoure,  
With your steele darts doo chace from comming neer ;  
Be also present heere,  
To helpe to decke her, and to help to sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Wake now, my love, awake ! for it is time ;  
The Rosy Morne long since left Tithones bed,  
All ready to her silver coche to clyme ;  
And Phœbus gins to shew his glorious hed.  
Hark ! how the cheerefull birds do chaunt theyr laies  
And carroll of Loves praise.  
The merry Larke hir mattins sings aloft ;  
The Thrush replyes ; the Mavis descant playes :  
The Ouzell shrills ; the Ruddock warbles soft ;  
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent,  
To this dayes merriment.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Ah ! my deere love, why doe ye sleepe thus long,  
When meeter were that ye should now awake,  
T' awayt the comming of your joyous make,<sup>1</sup>  
And hearken to the birds love-learned song,  
The deawy leaves among !  
Nor they of joy and pleasance to you sing,  
That all the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

My love is now awake out of her dreames,  
And her fayre eyes, like stars that dimmed were  
With darksome cloud, now shew theyr goodly beams  
More bright then Hesperus his head doth rere.  
Come now, ye damzels, daughters of delight,  
Helpe quickly her to dight :  
But first come ye fayre houres, which were begot,  
In Joves sweet paradise of Day and Night ;  
Which doe the seasons of the yeare allot,  
And al, that ever in this world is fayre,  
Doe make and still repayre :  
And ye three handmayds of the Cyprian Queene,  
The which doe still adorne her beauties pride,  
Helpe to adorne my beautifullest bride :  
And, as ye her array, still throw betweene  
Some graces to be seene ;  
And, as ye use to Venus, to her sing,  
The whiles the woods shal answer, and your eccho  
ring.

Now is my love all ready forth to come :  
Let all the virgins therefore well awayt :  
And ye fresh boyes, that tend upon her groome,  
Prepare your selves ; for he is comming strayt.  
Set all your things in seemely good aray,  
Fit for so joyfull day :  
The joyfulst day that ever sunne did see.

<sup>1</sup> Mate.

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Faire Sun ! shew forth thy favourable ray,  
And let thy lifull<sup>1</sup> heat not fervent be,  
For feare of burning her sunshyny face,  
Her beauty to disgrace.

O fayrest Phœbus ! father of the Muse !  
If ever I did honour thee aright,  
Or sing the thing that mote thy mind delight,  
Doe not thy servants simple boone refuse ;  
But let this day, let this one day, be myne ;  
Let all the rest be thine.

Then I thy soverayne prayses loud wil sing,  
That all the woods shal answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Harke ! how the Minstrils gin to shrill aloud  
Their merry Musick that resounds from far,  
The pipe, the tabor, and the trembling Croud.  
That well agree withouten breach or jar.  
But, most of all, the Damzels doe delite  
When they their tymbrels smyte,  
And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,  
That all the sences they doe ravish quite ;  
The whyles the boyes run up and downe the street,  
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,  
As if it were one voyce,  
Hymen, iö Hymen, Hymen, they do shout ;  
That even to the heavens theyr shouting shrill  
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill ;  
To which the people standing all about,  
As in approvance, doe thereto applaud,  
And loud advaunce her laud ;  
And evermore they Hymen, Hymen sing,  
That al the woods them answer, and theyr eccho ring.

Loe ! where she comes along with portly pace,  
Lyke Phœbe, from her chamber of the East,

<sup>1</sup> Living.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Arysing forth to run her mighty race,  
Clad all in white, that seemes a virgin best.  
So well it her beseemes, that ye would weene  
Some angell she had beene.  
Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre,  
Sprinckled with perle, and perling flowres atweene,  
Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre ;  
And, being crowned with a girland greene,  
Seeme lyke some mayden Queene.  
Her modest eyes, abashed to behold  
So many gazers as on her do stare,  
Upon the lowly ground affixed are ;  
Ne dare lift up her countenance too bold,  
But blush to heare her prayses sung so loud,  
So farre from being proud.  
Nathlesse doe ye still loud her prayses sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Tell me, ye merchants daughters, did ye see  
So fayre a creature in your towne before ;  
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,  
Adorn'd with beautyes grace and vertues store ?  
Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,  
Her forehead yvory white,  
Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,  
Her lips lyke cherries charming men to byte,  
Her brest lyke to a bowle of creame uncruddled,  
Her paps lyke lyllies budded,  
Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre ;  
And all her body like a pallace fayre,  
Ascending up, with many a stately stayre,  
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre.  
Why stand ye still ye virgins in amaze,  
Upon her so to gaze,  
Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,  
To which the woods did answer, and your eccho ring ?



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,  
The inward beauty of her lively spright,  
Garnisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,  
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,  
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red  
Medusaes mazeful hed.  
There dwels sweet love, and constant chastity,  
Unspotted fayth, and comely womanhood,  
Regard of honour, and mild modesty ;  
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,  
And giveth lawes alone,  
The which the base affections doe obay,  
And yeeld theyr services unto her will ;  
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may  
Thereto approach to tempt her mind to ill.  
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,  
And unrevealed pleasures,  
Then would ye wonder, and her prayses sing,  
That al the woods should answer, and your eccho ring.

Open the temple gates unto my love,  
Open them wide that she may enter in,  
And all the postes adorne as doth behove,  
And all the pillours deck with girlands trim,  
For to receyve this Saynt with honour dew,  
That commeth in to you.  
With trembling steps, and humble reverence,  
She commeth in, before th' Almightyes view ;  
Of her ye virgins learne obedience,  
When so ye come into those holy places,  
To humble your proud faces :  
Bring her up to th' high altar, that she may  
The sacred ceremonies there partake,  
The which do endlesse matrimony make,  
And let the roing Organs loudly play

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

The praises of the Lord in lively notes ;  
The whiles, with hollow throates,  
The Choristers the joyous Antheme sing,  
That al the woods may answere, and their eccho ring.

Behold, whiles she before the altar stands,  
Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes,  
And blesseth her with his two happy hands,  
How the red roses flush up in her cheekes,  
And the pure snow, with goodly vermill stayne  
Like crimsin dyde in grayne :  
That even th' Angels, which continually  
About the sacred Altare doe remaine,  
Forget their service and about her fly,  
Ofte peeping in her face, that seems more fayre,  
The more they on it stare.  
But her sad eyes, still fastened on the ground,  
Are governed with goodly modesty,  
That suffers not one looke to glaunce awry,  
Which may let in a little thought unsownd.  
Why blush ye, love, to give to me your hand,  
The pledge of all our band !  
Sing, ye sweet Angels, Alleluya sing,  
That all the woods may answere, and your eccho ring.

Now al is done : bring home the bride againe ;  
Bring home the triumph of our victory :  
Bring home with you the glory of her gaine  
With joyance bring her and with jollity.  
Never had man more joyfull day than this,  
Whom heaven would heape with blis,  
Make feast therefore now all this live-long day ;  
This day for ever to me holy is.  
Poure out the wine without restraint or stay,

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Poure out to all that wull,  
And sprinkle all the postes and wals with wine,  
That they may sweat, and drunken be withall.  
Crowne ye God Bacchus with a coronall,  
And Hymen also crowne with wreathes of vine ;  
And let the Graces daunce unto the rest,  
For they can doo it best :  
The whiles the maydens doe theyr carroll sing,  
To which the woods shall answer, and theyr eccho  
ring.

Ring ye the bells, ye yong men of the towne,  
And leave your wonted labors for this day :  
This day is holy ; doe ye write it downe,  
That ye for ever it remember may.  
This day the sunne is in his chiefest hight,  
With Barnaby the bright,  
From whence declining daily by degrees,  
He somewhat loseth of his heat and light,  
When once the Crab behind his back he sees.  
But for this time it ill ordained was,  
To chose the longest day in all the yeare,  
And shortest night, when longest fitter weare :  
Yet never day so long, but late would passe.  
Ring ye the bells, to make it weare away,  
And bonefiers make all day ;  
And daunce about them, and about them sing,  
That all the woods may answer, and your eccho ring.

Ah ! when will this long weary day have end,  
And lende me leave to come unto my love ?  
How slowly do the houres theyr numbers spend ?  
How slowly does sad Time his feathers move ?  
Hast thee, O fayrest Planet, to thy home,  
Within the Westernne fome :

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Thy tyred steedes long since have need of rest.  
Long though it be, at last I see it gloome,  
And the bright evening-star with golden creast  
Apppeare out of the East.  
Fayre childe of beauty ! glorious lampe of love !  
That all the host of heaven in rankes doost lead,  
And guydest lovers through the nights sad dread,  
How chearefully thou lookest from above,  
And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light,  
As joying in the sight  
Of these glad many, which for joy doe sing,  
That all the woods them answer, and their eccho ring !

Now ceasse, ye damsels, your delights fore-past ;  
Enough it is that all the day was youres :  
Now day is doen, and night is nighing fast,  
Now bring the Bryde into the brydall boures.  
The night is come, now soon her disaray,  
And in her bed her lay ;  
Lay her in lillies and in violets,  
And silken courteins over her display,  
And odour sheetes, and arras coverlets.  
Behold how goodly my faire love does ly,  
In proud humility !  
Like unto Maia, when as Jove her took  
In Tempe, lying on the flowry gras,  
Twixt sleepe and wake, after she weary was,  
With bathing in the Acidalian brooke.  
Now it is night, ye damsels may be gon.  
And leave my love alone,  
And leave likewise your former lay to sing :  
The woods no more shall answere, nor your eccho ring.

Now welcome, night ! thou night so long expected,  
That long daies labour doest at last defray,



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

And all my cares, which cruell Love collected,  
Hast sumd in one, and cancelled for aye :  
Spread thy broad wing over my love and me,  
That no man may us see ;

And in thy sable mantle us enwrap,  
From feare of perrill and foule horror free.

Let no false treason seeke us to entrap,  
Nor any dread disquiet once annoy

The safety of our joy ;

But let the night be calme and quietsome,

Without tempestuous storms or sad afray :

Lyke as when Jove with fayre Alcmena lay,

When he begot the great Tiryntian groome :

Or lyke as when he with thy selfe did lie

And begot Majesty.

And let the mayds and yongmen cease to sing,

Ne let the woods them answer nor their eccho  
ring.

Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull teares,

Be heard all night within, nor yet without :

Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden feares,

Breake gentle sleepe with misconceived dout.

Let no deluding dreames, nor dreadfull sights,

Make sudden sad affrights ;

Ne let house-fyres, nor lightnings helpelesse harmes,

Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights,

Ne let mischivous witches with their charmes,

Ne let hob Goblins, names whose sence we see not,

Fray us with things that be not :

Let not the shriech Oule nor the Storke be heard,

Nor the night Raven, that still deadly yels ;

Nor damned ghosts, cald up with mighty spels,

Nor griesly vultures, make us once affeard :

Ne let th' unpleasant Quayre of Frogs still croking

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Make us to wish theyr choking.  
Let none of these theyr drery accents sing ;  
Ne let the woods them answer, nor theyr eccho  
ring.

But let stil Silence trew night-watches keepe,  
That sacred Peace may in assurance rayne,  
And tymely Sleep, when it is tyme to sleepe,  
May poure his limbs forth on your pleasant playne ;  
The whiles an hundred little winged loves,  
Like divers-fethered doves,  
Shall fly and flutter round about your bed,  
And in the secret darke, that none reproves,  
Their prety stealthes shal worke, and snares shal  
spread

To filch away sweet snatches of delight,  
Conceald through covert night.  
Ye sonnes of Venus, play your sports at will !  
For greedy pleasure, carelesse of your toyes,  
Thinks more upon her paradise of joyes,  
Then what ye do, albe it good or ill.  
All night therefore attend your merry play,  
For it will soone be day :  
Now none doth hinder you, that say or sing ;  
Ne will the woods now answer, nor your Eccho ring.

Who is the same, which at my window peepes ?  
Or whose is that faire face that shines so bright ?  
Is it not Cinthia, she that never sleepes,  
But walkes about high heaven al the night ?  
O ! fayrest goddesse, do thou not envy  
My love with me to spy :  
For thou likewise didst love, though now unthought,  
And for a fleece of wooll, which privily  
The Latmian shepherd once unto thee brought,

# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

His pleasures with thee wrought.  
Therefore to us be favorable now ;  
And sith of wemens labours thou hast charge,  
And generation goodly dost enlarge,  
Encline thy will t'effect our wishfull vow,  
And the chaste wombe informe with timely seed,  
That may our comfort breed :  
Till which we cease our hopefull hap to sing ;  
Ne let the woods us answere, nor our Eccho ring.

And thou, great Juno ! which with awful might  
The lawes of wedlock still dost patronize ;  
And the religion of the faith first plight  
With sacred rites hast taught to solemnize,  
And eeke for comfort often called art  
Of women in their smart ;  
Eternally bind thou this lovely band,  
And all thy blessings unto us impart.  
And thou, glad Genius ! in whose gentle hand  
The bridale bowre and geniall bed remaine,  
Without blemish or staine ;  
And the sweet pleasures of theyr loves delight  
With secret ayde doest succour and supply,  
Till they bring forth the fruitfull progeny ;  
Send us the timely fruit of this same night.  
And thou, fayre Hebe ! and thou, Hymen free !  
Grant that it may so be.  
Til which we cease your further prayse to sing ;  
Ne any woods shall answer, nor your Eccho ring.

And ye high heavens, the temple of the gods,  
In which a thousand torches flaming bright  
Doe burne, that to us wretched earthly clods  
In dreadful darknesse lend desired light ;  
And all ye powers which in the same remayne,

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More then we men can fayne !  
Poure out your blessing on us plentiously,  
And happy influence upon us raine,  
That we may raise a large posterity,  
Which from the earth, which they may long possesse  
With lasting happinesse,  
Up to your haughty pallaces may mount ;  
And, for the guerdon of theyr glorious merit,  
May heavenly tabernacles there inherit,  
Of blessed Saints for to increase the count.  
So let us rest, sweet love, in hope of this,  
And cease till then our tymely joyes to sing :  
The woods no more us answer, nor our eccho ring !

*Song ! made in lieu of many ornaments,  
With which my love should duly have been dect,  
Which cutting off through hasty accidents,  
Yet would not stay your dew time to expect,  
But promist both to recompens ;  
Be unto her a goodly ornament,  
And for short time an endlesse moniment.*

Before the publication of the "Amoretti" and "Epithalamion" Spenser was involved in unpleasant quarrels with a neighbour, Lord Roche, which had to be taken to a court of law. Maurice, Lord Roche, Viscount Fermoy, presented three petitions to the Lord Chancellor of Ireland against "one Edmond Spenser, gentleman, . . . a heavy adversary to your suppliant." The question at issue concerned plough-lands belonging to two estates, Shanballymore and Ballingerath. The upshot of the litigation was that in February 1594—that



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is, just four months before his wedding—Lord Roche was decreed the possession. “It is clear,” writes Professor J. W. Hales, “that all his dreams of Faerie did not make him [Spenser] neglectful of his earthly estate. Like Shakespeare, like Scott, Spenser did not cease to be a man of the world—we use the phrase in no unkindly sense—because he was a poet. He was no mere visionary, helpless in the ordinary affairs of life.” Meanwhile it is probable that such litigation did not render him any more acceptable to the Irish natives of the district.

In the year 1595 Sidney’s “Apology for Poetry” was published, after remaining in manuscript circulation for some fourteen years, a circumstance which, it may readily be imagined, gave great pleasure to our poet, in spite of the unfavourable criticism it contained of the language of the “Shepherd’s Calendar.” It is not impossible that Spenser first saw the printed book in London, as towards the end of the year he crossed to England again. This time he had with him (probably) his wife, the manuscript of the “Fairy Queen,” Books IV.-VI., and his prose work entitled “A View of the Present State of Ireland.”

It was now four years since Spenser had been in London. How great and good had been the literary output in that time! To say nothing of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, among others Constable, Greene, Lyly, Marlowe, Nash, Drayton, Lodge, Peele, Chapman, Hooker, Daniel, and Florio had published one or more

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works. Greene and Marlowe, Montaigne and Tasso had died. It was time he once more put out some work if so many brilliant rivals were not to wrest from him the primacy. Accordingly, in 1596, during his stay in England, he published the second three books of the "Fairy Queen." Surely on the strength of this he would win preferment that would relieve him of the necessity of returning to his exile in Ireland. With the Earl of Essex, then fresh from his splendid exploit at Cadiz, as his patron and intimate, he would at last be rewarded.

But his hopes were not to be realised : he must be content with a poet's fame. Possibly it was that very intimacy with Essex which spoilt his chances of promotion. His new instalment of his great work brought immediate popularity, largely because of its many references to passing events. The only person who was not pleased was the King of Scotland, who was deeply offended by the references, in the character of Duessa, to his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, and he tried—in vain—to get Spenser tried and punished.

It was during this stay in London that Spenser put into manuscript circulation a work which has been mentioned, though it is not directly connected with his poetry, "A View of the Present State of Ireland." This is a work cast in the form of a dialogue, so common at the time, between Eudoxus, apparently a disinterested listener, and Irenæus (Spenser). It is a work of some length and value, and not

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only describes contemporary Ireland, but is also antiquarian. The object is to set out the unsatisfactory state of the country and its causes, and to suggest remedies. Brought up in the school of Lord Grey, and in fact following the ideas of his time which he is not able to transcend, the poet proposes repressive measures properly carried out. He is certainly not above sharing the prejudices of his race and position, and few could blame him if his views are on the severe side. Here again we find him no dreamer of dreams, but a practical man who must have been very busy during his stay in Ireland observing and noting other things than poetical ideas and expressions. It seems from the close of the work that Spenser had intended to publish another volume dealing chiefly with Irish antiquities. Here are the opening sentences of the dialogue.

*Eudox.* But yf that countrey of Ireland, whence you lately came, be soe goodly and commodious a soyle, as ye report, I wonder that noe course is taken for the turning therof to good uses, and reducing of that savadge nation to better government and civilitye.

*Iren.* Marry, soe there have beene divers good plottes devised, and wise counsells cast alleready about reformation of that realme; but they say, it is the fatall desteny of that land, that noe purposes, whatsoever are meant for her good, will prosper or take good effect.

It was during this stay in England that he wrote the four hymns, "In Honour of Love,"

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“ In Honour of Beauty,” “ Of Heavenly Love,”  
“ Of Heavenly Beauty.” At any rate, they are dedicated, from Greenwich, September 1, 1596, jointly to the Countess of Cumberland and the Countess of Warwick. He had, he says, in his youth composed two hymns in praise of Love and Beauty, but “ finding that the same too much pleased those of like age and disposition, which being too vehemently caried with that kind of affection, do rather sucke out poyson to their strong passion, then hony to their honest delight, I was moved by the one of you two most excellent Ladies to call in the same. But, being unable so to doe, by reason that many copies thereof were formerly scattered abroad, I resolved at least to amend, and, by way of retractation, to reform them, making, in stead of these two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestially.” He now dedicates all four “ in lieu of the great graces and honourable favours which ye dayly shew unto me.” The note of spiritual contemplation and lofty Platonism is first seen in “ The Shepherd’s Calendar ” (“ October ”) in such a passage as

Ah, fon ! <sup>1</sup> for love does teach him climbe so hie,  
And lyftes him up out of the loathsome myre :  
Such immortal mirrhor, as he doth admire,  
Would rayse ones mynd above the starry skie,  
And cause a caytive corage to aspire ;  
For lofty love doth loath a lowly eye.

<sup>1</sup> Fool.



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The theme, developed in "Colin Clout," the "Epithalamion," the "Amoretti," and the "Fairy Queen," finds its highest expression in these four hymns. Here then is an important essential of Spenser's poetry, a sort of poetical core which is found in all the literary forms to which he put his hand. Of the four hymns, that to Beauty is probably the finest. "This hymn," says Professor Hales, "is one high refined rapture." Spenser is worshipping at the shrine of his own goddess, Beauty, whose sphere is not so much external colour and form as spiritual thought. We now quote this in its entirety :

### AN HYMNE IN HONOUR OF BEAUTIE

Ah ! whither, Love ! wilt thou now carrie mee ?  
What wontlesse fury dost thou now inspire  
Into my feeble breast, too full of thee ?  
Whylest seeking to aslake thy raging fyre,  
Thou in me kindlest much more great desyre,  
And up aloft above my strength doest rayse  
The wondrous matter of my fyre to prayse.

That as I earst, in praise of thine owne name,  
So now in honour of thy Mother deare,  
An honourable Hymne I eke should frame,  
And, with the brightnesse of her beautie cleare,  
The ravisht harts of gazefull men might reare  
To admiration of that heavenly light,  
From whence proceeds such soule-enchauting might.

Therto do thou, great Goddess ! Queene of Beauty,  
Mother of love, and of all worlds delight,  
Without whose soverayne grace and kindly dewty

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Nothing on earth seemes fayre to fleshly sight,  
Doe thou vouchsafe with thy love-kindling light  
T' illuminate my dim and dulled eyne,  
And beautifie this sacred hymne of thyne :

That both to thee, to whom I meane it most,  
And eke to her, whose faire immortall beame  
Hath darted fyre into my feeble ghost,  
That now it wasted is with woes extreame,  
It may so please, that she at length will streame  
Some deaw of grace into my withered hart,  
After long sorrow and consuming smart.

What time this worlds great Workmaister did cast  
To make al things such as we now behold,  
It seemes that He before his eyes had plast  
A goodly Paterne, to whose perfect mould  
He fashiond them as comely as He could,  
That now so faire and seemely they appeare,  
As nought may be amended any wheare.

That wondrous Paterne, wheresoere it bee,  
Whether in earth layd up in secret store,  
Or else in heaven, that no man may it see  
With sinfull eyes, for feare it to deflore,  
Is perfect Beautie, which all men adore ;  
Whose face and feature doth so much excell  
All mortall sence, that none the same may tell.

Thereof as every earthly thing partakes  
Or more or lesse, by influence divine,  
So it more faire accordingly it makes,  
And the grosse matter of this earthly myne  
Which clotheth it thereafter doth refyne,  
Doing away the drosse which dims the light  
Of that faire beame which therein is empight.

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For, through infusion of celestiall powre,  
The duller earth it quickneth with delight,  
And life-full spirits privily doth powre  
Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight  
They seeme to please ; That is thy soveraine might,  
O Cyprian Queene ! which flowing from the beame  
Of thy bright starre, thou into them doest streame.

That is the thing which giveth pleasant grace  
To all things faire, that kindleth lively fyre,  
Light of thy lampe ; which, shyning in the face,  
Thence to the soule darts amorous desyre,  
And robs the harts of those which it admyre ;  
Therewith thou pointest thy Sons poysned arrow,  
That wounds the life, and wastes the inmost marrow.

How vainely then doe ydle wits invent,  
That beautie is nought else but mixture made  
Of colours faire, and goodly temp'rament  
Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade  
And passe away, like to a sommers shade ;  
Or that it is but comely composition  
Of parts well measurd, with meet disposition !

Hath white and red in it such wondrous powre,  
That it can pierce through th' eyes unto the hart,  
And therein stirre such rage and restlesse stowre,  
As nought but death can stint his dolours smart ?  
Or can proportion of the outward part  
Move such affection in the inward mynd,  
That it can rob both sense, and reason blynd ?

Why doe not then the blossomes of the field,  
Which are arayd with much more orient hew,  
And to the sense most daintie odours yield,

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Worke like impression in the lookers vew ?  
Or why doe not faire pictures like powre shew,  
In which oft-times we nature see of art  
Exceld, in perfect limming every part ?

But ah ! beleeeve me there is more then so,  
That workes such wonders in the minds of men ;  
I, that have often prov'd, too well it know,  
And who so list the like assayes to ken,  
Shall find by tryall, and confesse it then,  
That Beautie is not, as fond men misdeeme,  
An outward shew of things that onely seeme.

For that same goodly hew of white and red,  
With which the cheekes are sprinckled, shal decay,  
And those sweete rosy leaves, so fairely spred  
Upon the lips, shall fade and fall away  
To that they were, even to corrupted clay :  
That golden wyre, those sparckling stars so bright,  
Shall turne to dust, and loose their goodly light.

But that faire lampe, from whose celestially ray  
That light proceedes, which kindleth lovers fire,  
Shall never be extinguisht nor decay ;  
But, when the vitall spirits doe expyre,  
Unto her native planet shall retyre ;  
For it is heavenly borne and can not die,  
Being a parcell of the purest skie.

For when the soule, the which derived was,  
At first, out of that great immortall Spright,  
By whom all live to love, whilome did pas  
Downe from the top of purest heavens hight  
To be embodied here, it then tooke light  
And lively spirits from that fayrest starre  
Which lights the world forth from his firie carre.



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Which powre retayning still or more or lesse,  
When she in fleshly seede is eft <sup>1</sup> enraced,  
Through every part she doth the same impresse,  
According as the heavens have her graced,  
And frames her house, in which she will be placed,  
Fit for her selfe, adorning it with spoyle  
Of th' heavenly riches which she robd erewhyle.

Therof it comes that these faire soules, which have  
The most resemblance of that heavenly light,  
Frame to themselves most beautifull and brave  
Their fleshly bowre, most fit for their delight,  
And the grosse matter by a souveraine might  
Tempers so trim, that it may well be seene  
A pallace fit for such a virgin Queene.

So every spirit, as it is most pure,  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the fairer bodie doth procure  
To habit in, and it more fairely dight  
With chearefull grace and amiable sight ;  
For of the soule the bodie forme doth take ;  
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make.

Therefore where-ever that thou doest behold  
A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,  
Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold  
A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed,  
Fit to receive the seede of vertue strewed ;  
For all that faire is, is by nature good ;  
That is a signe to know the gentle blood.

Yet oft it falles that many a gentle mynd  
Dwels in deformed tabernacle drownd,  
Either by chaunce, against the course of kynd,  
Or through unaptnesse in the substance fownd,

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards.

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Which it assumed of some stubborne grownd,  
That will not yield unto her formes direction,  
But is deform'd with some foule imperfection.

And oft it falles, (aye me, the more to rew !)  
That goodly beautie, albe heavenly borne,  
Is foule abusd, and that celestially hew,  
Which doth the world with her delight adorne,  
Made but the bait of sinne, and sinners scorne,  
Whilest every one doth seeke and sew to have it,  
But every one doth seeke but to deprave it.

Yet nathẽmore is that faire beauties blame,  
But theirs that do abuse it unto ill :  
Nothing so good, but that through guilty shame  
May be corrupt, and wrested unto will :  
Nathelesse the soule is faire and beauteous still,  
How ever flesh fault it filthy make ;  
For things immortall no corruption take.

But ye, faire Dames ! the worlds deare ornaments  
And lively images of heavens light,  
Let not your beames with such disparagements  
Be dimd, and your bright glorie darkned quight ;  
But, mindfull still of your first countries sight,  
Doe still preserve your first informed grace,  
Whose shadow yet shynes in your beauteous face.

Loath that foule blot, that hellish fiẽrbrand,  
Disloiall lust, faire beauties foulest blame,  
That base affections, which your eares would bland  
Commend to you by loves abused name,  
But is indeede the bondslave of defame ;  
Which will the garland of your glorie marre,  
And quench the light of your bright shyning starre.

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But gentle Love, that loiall is and trew,  
Will more illumine your resplendent ray,  
And adde more brightnesse to your goodly hew,  
From light of his pure fire ; which, by like way  
Kindled of yours, your likenesse doth display ;  
Like as two mirroures, by opposd reflexion,  
Doe both expresse the faces first impression.

Therefore, to make your beautie more appeare,  
It you behoves to love, and forth to lay  
That heavenly riches which in you ye beare,  
That men the more admyre their fountaine may ;  
For else what booteth that celestiall ray,  
If it in darknesse be enshrined ever,  
That it of loving eyes be vewed never ?

But, in your choice of Loves, this well advize,  
That likest to your selves ye them select,  
The which your forms first sourse may sympathize,  
And with like beauties parts be inly deckt ;  
For, if you loosely love without respect,  
It is no love, but a discordant warre,  
Whose unlike parts amongst themselves do jarre.

For Love is a celestiall harmonie  
Of likely harts composd of starres concent,  
Which joyne together in sweete sympathie,  
To worke ech others joy and true content,  
Which they have harbourd since their first descent  
Out of their heavenly bowres, where they did see  
And know ech other here belov'd to bee.

Then wrong it were that any other twaine  
Should in loves gentle band combyned bee  
But those whom heaven did at first ordaine,  
And made out of one mould the more t' agree ;

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For all, that like the beautie which they see,  
Streight do not love ; for Love is not so light  
As streight to burne at first beholders sight.

But they, which love indeede, looke otherwise,  
With pure regard and spotlesse true intent,  
Drawing out of the object of their eyes  
A more refyned forme, which they present  
Unto their mind, voide of all blemishment ;  
Which it reducing to her first perfection,  
Beholdeth free from fleshs frayle infection.

And then conforming it unto the light,  
Which in it selfe it hath remaining still,  
Of that first Sunne, yet sparckling in his sight,  
Thereof he fashions in his higher skill  
An heavenly beautie to his fancies will ;  
And, it embracing in his mind entyre,  
The mirrour of his owne thought doth admyre.

Which seeing now so inly faire to be,  
As outward it appeareth to the eye,  
And with his spirits proportion to agree,  
He thereon fixeth all his fantasie,  
And fully setteth his felicitie ;  
Counting it fairer then it is indeede,  
And yet indeede her fairnesse doth excede.

For lovers eyes more sharply sighted bee  
Then other mens, and in deare loves delight  
See more then any other eyes can see,  
Through mutuall receipt of beamēs bright,  
Which carrie privie message to the spright,  
And to their eyes that inmost faire display,  
As plaine as light discovers dawning day.



## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Therein they see, through amorous eye-glaunces,  
Armies of Loves still flying too and fro,  
Which dart at them their litle fierie launces ;  
Whom having wounded, backe againe they go,  
Carrying compassion to their lovely foe ;  
Who, seeing her faire eyes so sharpe effect,  
Cures all their sorrowes with one sweete aspect.

In which how many wonders doe they reede  
To their conceipt, that others never see !  
Now of her smiles, with which their soules they feede,  
Like Gods with Nectar in their bankets free ;  
Now of her lookes, which like to Cordials bee ;  
But when her words embassage forth she sends,  
Lord, how sweete musicke that unto them lends !

Sometimes upon her forehead they behold  
A thousand Graces masking in delight ;  
Sometimes within her eye-lids they unfold  
Ten thousand sweet belgards,<sup>1</sup> which to their sight  
Doe seeme like twinckling starres in frostie night ;  
But on her lips, like rosy buds in May,  
So many millions of chaste pleasures play.

All those, O Cytherea ! and thousands more  
Thy handmaides be, which do on thee attend,  
To decke thy beautie with their dainties store,  
That may it more to mortall eyes commend,  
And make it more admyr'd of foe and frend ;  
That in mens harts thou mayst thy throne enstall,  
And spred thy lovely kingdome over-all.

Then Iö, tryumph ! O great Beauties Queene,  
Advance the banner of thy conquest hie,

<sup>1</sup> Kind looks.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

That all this world, the which thy vassals beene,  
May draw to thee, and with dew fēaltie  
Adore the powre of thy great Majestie,  
Singing this Hymne in honour of thy name,  
Compyld by me, which thy poore liegeman am !

In lieu whereof graunt, O great Soveraine !  
That she, whose conquering beautie doth captive  
My trembling hart in her eternall chaine,  
One drop of grace at length will to me give,  
That I her bounden thrall by her may live,  
And this same life, which first fro me she reaved,  
May owe to her, of whom I it received.

And you, faire Venus dearling, my deare dread !  
Fresh flowre of grace, great Goddess of my life,  
When your faire eyes these fearefull lines shal read,  
Deigne to let fall one drop of dew reliefe,  
That may recure my harts long pyning grieve,  
And shew what wondrous powre your beauty hath,  
That can restore a damned wight from death.

Before the end of 1596 was written and published the "Prothalamion." Coleridge praises the poem for "the swan-like movement of the lines." It has a peculiar beauty, a combination of graceful rhythm and musical sound. It is the last complete poem published by Spenser, a swan-song in another sense. It is quoted in full ; and not least interesting is the autobiographical stanza in which he avows his love for London, the London which it may be supposed he would never willingly have left,

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# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

and to which he was shortly to return in distress, as to his "most kyndly Nurse."

## PROTHALAMION.

or,

## A SPOUSALL VERSE,

made by

EDM. SPENSER,

In Honour of the Double Mariage of the Two Honorable and Vertuous Ladies, the Ladie Elizabeth, and the Ladie Katherine Somerset, Daughters to the Right Honourable the Earle of Worcester, and espoused to the Two Worthie Gentlemen M. Henry Gilford, and M. William Peter, Esquyers.

Calme was the day, and through the trembling ayre  
Sweete-breathing Zephyrus did softly play  
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay  
Hot Titans beames, which then did glyster fayre ;  
When I, (whom sullein care,  
Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay  
In Princes Court, and expectation vayne  
Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away,  
Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne,  
Walkt forth to ease my payne  
Along the shoare of silver streaming Themmes ;  
Whose ruddy Bancke, he which his River hemmes  
Was paynted all with variable flowers,  
And all the meades adornd with daintie gemmes  
Fit to decke maydens bowres,  
And crowne their Paramours  
Against the Brydale day, which is not long :  
Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

There, in a Meadow, by the Rivers side,  
A Flocke of Nymphes I chaunced to espy,  
All lovely Daughters of the Flood thereby,  
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untyde,  
As each had bene a Bryde ;  
And each one had a little wicker basket,  
Made of fine twigs, entrayled curiously,  
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,  
And with fine Fingers cropt full feateously  
The tender stalkes on hye.  
Of every sort, which in that Meadow grew,  
They gathered some ; the Violet, pallid blew,  
The little Dazie, that at evening closes,  
The virgin Lillie, and the Primrose trew,  
With store of vermeil Roses,  
To decke their Bridegromes posies  
Against the Brydale day, which was not long :  
    Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my  
    Song.

With that I saw two Swannes of goodly hewe  
Come softly swimming downe along the Lee ;  
Two fairer Birds I yet did never see ;  
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,  
Did never whiter shew,  
Nor Jove himselfe, when he a Swan would be,  
For love of Leda, whiter did appeare ;  
Yet Leda was (they say) as white as he,  
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing neare ;  
So purely white they were,  
That even the gentle streame, the which them  
    bare,  
Seem'd foule to them, and bade his billowes spare  
To wet their silken feathers, least they might  
Soyle their fayre plumes with water not so fayre,



# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

And marre their beauties bright,  
That shone as heavens light,  
Against their Brydale day, which was not long :  
Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

Eftsoones the Nymphes, which now had Flowers their  
fill,

Ran all in haste to see that silver brood,  
As they came floating on the Christal Flood ;  
Whom when they sawe, they stood amazed still,  
Their wondring eyes to fill ;  
Them seem'd they never saw a sight so fayre,  
Of Fowles, so lovely, that they sure did deeme  
Them heavenly borne, or to be that same payre  
Which through the Skie draw Venus silver Teeme ;  
For sure they did not seeme  
To be begot of any earthly Seede,  
But rather Angels, or of Angels breede ;  
Yet were they bred of Somers-heat, they say,  
In sweetest Season, when each Flower and weede  
The earth did fresh aray ;  
So fresh they seem'd as day,  
Even as their Brydale day, which was not long :  
Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

Then forth they all out of their baskets drew  
Great store of Flowers, the honour of the field,  
That to the sense did fragrant odours yeild,  
All which upon those goodly Birds they threw  
And all the Waves did strew,  
That like old Peneus Waters they did seeme,  
When downe along by pleasant Tempes shore,  
Scattred with Flowres, through Thessaly they streeme,  
That they appeare, through Lillies plenteous store,  
Like a Brydes Chamber flore.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Two of those Nymphes, meane while, two Garlands  
bound

Of freshest Flowres which in that Mead they found,  
The which presenting all in trim Array,  
Their snowie Foreheads therewithall they crownd,  
Whil'st one did sing this Lay,  
Prepar'd against that Day,  
Against their Brydale day, which was not long :  
Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

“ Ye gentle Birdes ! the worlds faire ornament,  
And heavens glorie, whom this happie hower  
Doth leade unto your lovers blisfull bower,  
Joy may you have, and gentle hearts content  
Of your loves couplement ;  
And let faire Venus, that is Queene of love,  
With her heart-quelling Sonne upon you smile,  
Whose smile, they say, hath vertue to remove  
All Loves dislike, and friendships faultie guile  
For ever to assoile.  
Let endlesse Peace your steadfast hearts accord,  
And blessed Plentie wait upon your bord ;  
And let your bed with pleasures chaste abound,  
That fruitfull issue may to you afford,  
Which may your foes confound,  
And make your joyes redound  
Upon your Brydale day, which is not long :  
Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my  
Song.”

So ended she ; and all the rest around  
To her redoubled that her undersong,  
Which said their brydale daye should not be long :  
And gentle Eccho from the neighbour ground  
Their accents did resound.

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

So forth those joyous Birdes did passe along,  
Adowne the Lee, that to them murmurde low,  
As he would speake, but that he lackt a tong,  
Yet did by signes his glad affection show,  
Making his streame run slow.

And all the foule which in his flood did dwell  
Gan flock about these twaine, that did excell  
The rest, so far as Cynthia doth shend  
The lesser starres. So they, enranged well,  
Did on those two attend,  
And their best service lend  
Against their wedding day, which was not long :

Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

At length they all to mery London came,  
To mery London, my most kyndly Nurse,  
That to me gave this Lifes first native sourse,  
Though from another place I take my name,  
An house of auncient fame :

There when they came, whereas those bricky towres  
The which on Themmes brode aged backe doe ryde,  
Where now the studious Lawyers have their bowers,  
There whylome wont the Templer Knights to byde,  
Till they decayd through pride :

Next whereunto there standes a stately place,  
Where oft I gayned giftes and goodly grace  
Of that great Lord, which therein wont to dwell,  
Whose want too well now feeles my freendles case ;  
But ah ! here fits not well

Olde woes, but joyes, to tell  
Against the brydale daye, which is not long :

Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble Peer,  
Great Englands glory, and the Worlds wide wonder,

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

Whose dreadfull name late through all Spaine did  
thunder,

And Hercules two pillors standing neere

Did make to quake and feare :

Faire branch of Honor, flower of Chevalrie !

That fillest England with thy triumphes fame,

Joy have thou of thy noble victorie,

And endlesse happinesse of thine owne name

That promiseth the same ;

That through thy prowess, and victorious armes,

Thy country may be freed from forraine harmes ;

And great Elisaes glorious name may ring

Through al the world, fil'd with thy wide Alarmes,

Which some brave muse may sing

To ages following.

Upon the Brydale day, which is not long :

Sweete Themmes ! runne softly till I end my Song

From those high Towers this noble Lord issuing,

Like Radiant Hesper, when his golden hayre

In th' Ocean billowes he hath bathed fayre,

Descended to the Rivers open vewing,

With a great traine ensuing.

Above the rest were goodly to bee seene

Two gentle Knights of lovely face and feature,

Beseeming well the bower of anie Queene,

With gifts of wit, and ornaments of nature,

Fit for so goodly stature,

That like the twins of Jove they seem'd in sight,

Which decke the Bauldricke of the Heavens bright ;

They two, forth pacing to the Rivers side,

Received those two faire Brides, their Loves delight ;

Which, at th' appointed tyde,

Each one did make his Bryde

Against their Brydale day, which is not long :

Sweete Themmes ! runne softly, till I end my Song.



# SPENSER & HIS POETRY

## VI

OUR story is now hastening to its end. Not willingly, we may well suppose, did Spenser leave the brilliant circle of the metropolis to return to Kilcolman in 1597. Soon after his return he was made Sheriff of Cork on the recommendation of Queen Elizabeth: the death of Burghley seems to have somewhat opened his road to promotion. This further proof of his sovereign's interest and new family ties probably helped to reconcile him to residence in Ireland. By this time he had two sons and, possibly, a baby daughter, when in autumn broke out a fierce insurrection in Munster, and in October the Irish, glad of the opportunity of vengeance, attacked, burnt, and plundered Kilcolman. Spenser and his family barely escaped with their lives, and Ben Jonson says that a baby child perished in the flames. For the last time, and in great distress, he once more set out for London, the bearer of a dispatch from Sir Thomas Norreys, President of Munster, to the Secretary of State, and an address to the queen drawn up on the subject by himself. A sensitive man, he felt these horrors and hardships so keenly that he was completely prostrated. He died in King Street, Westminster, January 16, 1599. He was given a magnificent funeral at the expense of the Earl of Essex, and buried in Westminster Abbey near Chaucer. The queen, faithful to her favourite, ordered a monument to be erected

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

over him, but the money was otherwise appropriated by one of her agents. Anne, Countess of Dorset, erected in 1620 the present monument, which was restored in 1778.

If praise was anything to him—and it certainly was much—his last two months must have been cheered by the eulogy of his works contained in the “*Palladis Tamia, or Wit's Treasury*,” published in 1598 by Francis Meres. It will make a fitting summary and review of Spenser's poetry to quote from this book such praise as belongs to Spenser. “The English tongue is mightily enriched and gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent habiliments by Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser, Daniel (and others). . . . As Sextus Propertius said, ‘*Nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade*,’ so I say of Spenser's ‘*Fairy Queen*,’ I know not what more excellent or exquisite poem may be written. . . . Spenser's Eliza, the Fairy Queen, hath the advantage of all the queens in the world, to be eternised by so divine a poet. . . . As Theocritus is famed for his ‘*Idyllia*’ in Greek, and Virgil for his ‘*Eclogues*’ in Latin, so Spenser their imitator in his ‘*Shepherd's Calendar*’ is renowned for the like argument, and honoured for fine poetical invention and most exquisite wit. . . . As Homer and Virgil, so Spenser and Warner be our chief heroical ‘makers.’ . . . As Pindar, Anacreon, and Callimachus and Horace and Catullus, so in this faculty the first among our poets are Spenser, who excelleth in all kinds,

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Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare, Breton." And so on for elegies and pastorals. Obviously we have here the pure enthusiasm of an age which lacked discrimination.

"His career was brilliant, but unhappy," says a distinguished writer, an estimate to which we must demur. Brilliant it was, but how unhappy? He was most happy in his patrons and in his friendships, in his certain popularity, and above all in the constant exercise of his great faculty. As against this the circumstances of his Irish exile (which after all had its compensations) and of the two months of disaster before his end are of small account.

And now to return to our starting-point, and briefly to estimate the poet's work from the historical and the intrinsic points of view. Historically, Spenser's position is almost unique. After Chaucer, for two centuries no real poet arose until Spenser published the "Shepherd's Calendar." He transmits the Chaucerian tradition, the Italian influences of Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, and the French influences of Ronsard and du Bellay. His works are a kind of treasury of Platonic and chivalric ideas. He kept alight the fire of epic poetry in the "Fairy Queen"; his "Shepherd's Calendar" is "a sort of summary of the whole past history of pastoralism." He had his share in moulding the sonnet sequence. His deliberate effort certainly helped to enrich the English language, and more or less to fix a poetic standard of English. He was a master of metre, which he helped to regularise

contribute

## SPENSER & HIS POETRY

and to extend. Finally, his influence on later poets has been incalculable: he is "the poets' poet." His successors owe their greatest debt, probably, to his stanza, his elegies, and his "Epithalamion."

Considered intrinsically, Spenser is a modern master. Take only the extracts quoted in this little book, and estimate his merits. We find a romantic idealism unparalleled by any modern poet, and a high moral tone transcended by none. We find extraordinary powers of imagination: our selections alone are a perfect repository of images and similitudes. There is an amplitude and a fluency which carry us back to the Titan Elizabethans, to Shakespeare. A rich, suggestive poetical language, the beautiful music of the Spenserian stanza, and the melody of many metres, but especially of the so-called Pindaric verse of the "Epithalamion," a magnificent power of intense description, a wonderful and omnipresent sense of beauty, and especially of colour—in what modern poet shall we find all these combined better than in Spenser? A few episodes from the "Fairy Queen," the "Epithalamion" and "Prothalamion," and "The Hymn to Beauty" are alone sufficient answer to those who doubt whether Spenser can to-day stand on his intrinsic merits.



# APPENDIX

## METRE

*(Chiefly digested from Professor George Saintsbury)*

It would have made too long a digression in the story of Spenser's life and poetical work to go into his metrical merits, and it was well to allow the passages quoted to produce their own effect.

For further guidance a few scanned selections are now appended, and some remarks on Spenser's contribution to this side of English poetry.

(1) "Shepherd's Calendar."

(a) Strict Stanza.

Thou bar | ren ground, | whom win | ter's wrath |  
has wasted,  
Art made | a mir | ror to | behold | my plight :  
Whilome | thy fresh | spring flower'd, | and af | ter  
hasted  
Thy sum | mer proud, | with daf | fodil | lies  
dight ;  
And now | is come | thy win | ter's storm | y  
state,  
Thy man | tle marr'd | wherein | thou mask | edst  
late.

Iambic pentameters throughout, with one double (or feminine) rhyme.

(b) Octosyllabic (allowing the substitution of trisyllabic for disyllabic feet).

His harm | ful hat | chet <sup>u</sup>hē <sup>u</sup>hēnt | in hand,  
(Alas ! | that it | so read | y should stānd !)  
And to | the field | alone | he speedeth,

## APPENDIX

(Aye lit | tle help | to harm | there needeth !)  
 Anger | nould let | him speak | t̃o the tree,  
 Enaun | t̃er [=lest] h̃is rage | mought cool | ed bee.

(c) Stanza (admitting substitution).

Bring hi | th̃er the p̄ink | and pur | ple col | umbine,  
           With gil | liflow̄ers ;  
 Bring cor | ona | t̃ions | and sops | in wine,  
           Worn of par | amours.  
 Strow me | the ground | with daf | fadown | dillies,  
 And cow | slips and | kingcups | and lov | ed lil | lies :  
           The pret | ty paunce,  
           And the chev | isaunce,  
 Shall match | with the f̄air | flow'r delice.

In "daffadowndillies," "lillies," "delice," Spenser takes the doubtful liberty of shifting the accent to make the rhyme. It was natural in the then existing state of both language and versification that poets should be drawn to many shifts, but in the next century it began to be recognised that this particular device was more of a disfigurement than a convenience. It will be seen that, if the "Shepherd's Calendar" alone be considered, Spenser made bold experiments in metre.

(2) "Fairy Queen."

Spenserian Stanza (occasional slight substitution).

So pass | eth, in | the pass | ing of | a day  
 Of mor | tal life, | the leaf, | the bud, | the flower ;  
 No more | doth flour | ish af | ter first | decay  
 That erst | was sought | to deck | both bed | and bower

## APPENDIX

Of ma | ñy ă lā | đy ănd mā | ñy ă pā | ramour !  
 Gather, | therefore, | the rose | while yet | is prime,  
 For soon | comes age | that will | her pride | deflower :  
 Gather | the rose | of love | whilst yet | is time,  
 Whilst lov | ing thou | mayst lov | èd be | with e | qual  
 crime.

The pauses in lines 1-8 may be placed at discretion.  
 This facility renders the rhythm very various, and so  
 fitted for continued narrative.

In the last line the pause varies greatly : many  
 lines have the pause in the middle, as

The perill of his pride, | or else be over-run.

### (3) "Mother Hubberd's Tale."

Antithetic heroic couplet, stopped at the end of the  
 couplet.

Full lit | tle know | est thou | that hast | not tried,  
 What hell | it is, | in su | ing long | to bide :  
 To lose | good days | that might | be bet | ter spent ;  
 To waste | long nights | in pen | sive dis | content ;  
 To speed | to-day, | to be | put back | to-morrow ;  
 To feed | on hope, | to pine | with fear | and sorrow.

This form of verse is already very much in the con-  
 dition in which it was taken up by Dryden.

### (4) "Amoretti" (or Sonnets).

#### LXX

Fresh Spring, the herald of loves mighty king,  
 In whose cote-armour richly are displayd  
 All sorts of flowers, the which on earth do spring,  
 In goodly colours gloriously arrayd ;

## APPENDIX

Goe to my love, where she is carelesse layd,  
Yet in her winters bowre not well awake ;  
Tell her the joyous time wil not be staid,  
Unlesse she doe him by the forelock take ;  
Bid her therefore her selfe soone ready make,  
To wayt on Love amongst his lovely crew ;  
Where every one, that misseth then her make,  
Shall be by him amearst with penance dew.

Make hast, therefore, sweet love, whilst it is  
prime ;

For none can call againe the passed time.

The lines are perfectly regular iambic pentameters.

The rhymes are here 1, 3 ; 2, 4, 5, 7 ; 6, 8, 9, 11 ;  
10, 12 ; 13, 14.

The octave (or first eight lines) is mostly divided by  
a full pause from the last six or sextet.

### (5) " Epithalamion."

A so-called Pindaric stanza, with different line-  
lengths. This has already been commented upon  
(see p. 113).



# APPENDIX

## GENERAL REMARKS

The English fifteenth century was a period of metrical chaos. Poets, however, like Wyatt and Surrey, following Italian models, managed to bring back some order, though possibly the pendulum was allowed to swing back too far. Poets became too strict. These two, with Sackville, prepared the way by strict drilling for the real commander, Spenser. He must have been an untiring experimenter in verse, even in his early days, and most probably during those seven years at Cambridge. "For poetical excellence combined with prosodic variety it may be questioned whether Chaucer himself—his whole work being set against this novice's essay—can show anything equal." He is "master of every rhythm and metre that he tries . . . the inventor of the great Spenserian stanza, the greatest in every sense of all assemblages of lines, possessing individual beauty and capable of indefinite repetition."

# APPENDIX

## CHIEF EVENTS

- 1552. Born in East Smithfield.
- 1564. Went to Merchant Taylors' School.
- 1569. Went to Cambridge.
- 1576. Took M.A. degree.
- 1577. Went to London.
- 1579. "Shepherd's Calendar" published.
- 1580. Went to Ireland.
- 1586. Received grant of Kilcolman.
- 1589. Visited by Raleigh, with whom he returned to England.
- 1590. "Fairy Queen," Books I.-III., published.
- 1591. Awarded a pension by the queen. Published "Complaints."
- 1592. Returned to Ireland.
- 1594. Lawsuit with Lord Roche. Married Elizabeth Boyle.
- 1595. Published "Amoretti" (Sonnets), "Epithalamion," and "Colin Clout's Come Home Again."
- 1596. Returned to England. Published "Fairy Queene," Books IV.-VI., "Prothalamion," and four Hymns.
- 1597. Returned to Kilcolman.
- 1598. Made Sheriff of Cork. Sack of Kilcolman. Return to London.
- 1599. Died at Westminster, January 16.

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